

## Electric car now available as rental : Environmental groups promoting charging stations in county

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Mayor Helene Schneider took a cruise Wednesday with a spokesman from Enterprise Rent-A-Car to test the Nissan Leaf, an electric vehicle now being offered to patrons at the rental company's Santa Barbara location.

"The more and more we get into alternative fuels or even alternative-energy vehicles, that issue won't be an issue anymore," Ms. Schneider said, referring to citywide noise and air-pollution concerns being discussed by members of the City Council.

Ms. Schneider, along with members of the Santa Barbara Community Environmental Council's Plug In Santa Barbara group, are leading the charge for the proliferation of citywide infrastructure that supports electric vehicles - specifically, electric-vehicle charging stations.

"I'm just trying to work on our end to see where in the city those could fit," Ms. Schneider said. "It'd be great if we could put them, for example, in our downtown parking structures," she said.

Michael Chiacos, transportation specialist for the Community Environmental Council, said those at Plug In Santa Barbara are specifically championing the convenient use of electric vehicles.

"We've actually been coordinating, helping some of the cities get grant funding for charging stations," Mr. Chiacos said, adding that 17 electric-car charging stations are being installed throughout Santa Barbara County.

The project is being funded through a grant from the ChargePoint America program, which is spending \$37 million on the creation of 4,600 electric-vehicle charging stations across the country.

The nationwide installations are being funded through numerous avenues, including a \$15 million grant funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act administered by the Department of Energy and a \$22 million combined grant from a number of other public agencies.

The charging stations will be scattered along the South Coast and in parts of Santa Maria and Lompoc.

"Some of the other cities, including the city of Santa Barbara, are kind of in negotiations right now, but these ones that I've told you about are either in the ground or they've signed contracts already," Mr. Chiacos told the News-Press.

Some of the environmental benefits of driving an electric vehicle, said Mr. Chiacos, include no tailpipe emissions, overall reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions and reduced dependence on foreign oil.

"The grid here is clean enough that, when you plug in an electric vehicle, it reduces greenhouse gases by 75 percent compared to a gasoline car," Mr. Chiacos said. "One of the main reasons it does that is just because the engines are so much more efficient," he said.

"So, when you look at the EPA rating on the Leaf, it's almost 100 miles to the gallon equivalent, which is way better than any other gasoline car."

Southern California Edison will give a discounted rate to those who charge their vehicles at non-peak hours, Mr. Chiacos said.

"It would cost you, like, a quarter of the price of gasoline to charge your electric vehicle at night," he said. "Imagine if you could pay a dollar a gallon for gasoline."

Mr. Chiacos expects the countywide charging stations to be operational within the next three months.



Greg Tabak, director of business sales at Enterprise, recharges a Nissan Leaf.  
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