

Fresno: Get an electric bike to beat gas prices. The state may help you do it

By Jim Guy

The Fresno Bee, Wednesday, March 16, 2022

Bicycle riders in the Fresno area looking to upgrade to an electric model for quicker commutes and longer trips could soon get assistance to buy what can be an expensive purchase that ranges from more than \$2,000 up to \$10,000, under a state-sponsored measure due to go into effect in July. It could not come at a better time, with the price of regular at the pump in Fresno topping \$5.50 a gallon for regular. Under the E-Bike Affordability Campaign, \$10 million was set aside in a bill passed in 2019 for state residents to get financial help in purchasing an e-bike if they qualify, based on income. The measure expanded an existing law intended to remove old, polluting cars from the state's roadways through financial incentives. The money comes from the state's Cap-And-Trade program.

According to the bill's author, state Sen. Tom Umberg, D-Santa Ana, a 15 percent increase in e-bike use could result in an 11 percent decrease in CO2 emissions. Officials at the bicycle advocacy group CalBike, say details about the program are still being finalized. But here are some of them, as presented by the organization.

WHAT'S THE STATUS OF THE E-BIKE PROGRAM?

The California Air Resources Board, (CARB), is finalizing details on the program, which is due to go live in July, with a \$10 million allocation for this year, and continued funding in future years. The program is intended get people on the e-bikes instead of using gasoline-powered vehicles. Grants for low-income riders will be prioritized. and the project supports grants for a variety of electric bicycles, including, but not limited to, bicycles designed for people with disabilities; utility bikes for carrying equipment or passengers, including children; and folding e-bikes.

HOW MUCH FINANCIAL HELP CAN BE RECEIVED?

According to CalBike, that's still being worked out, but the program will be administered in the same manner as the Clean Cars 4-All program, intended to remove polluting cars from state roadways. But those buying an e-bike could select a "mobility option" as an alternative in regions where the air district implements the program. That would include the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

SO WHAT'S IT LIKE TO OWN AN E-BIKE?

According to Cynergyebikes, riders generally who pedal at a moderate level while being assisted by the lithium battery power system can expect to travel between 22 to 50 miles on a single charge. The battery will charge in 3 to 5 hours, less if it is partially charged already. Expect between 10,000 and 30,000 miles of battery life. The cost of the charge is estimated to be about a dime. The speed of some e-bikes approaches 30 mph. LOCAL BIKE SHOPS GEARING UP Rich Holdsworth of Rubber Soul bicycles near Friant Road and Blackstone Avenue in north Fresno said e-bikes are already "a big part of our business. "We are excited about any program like that It's good for Fresno and good for our air quality. (E-bikes) are a viable alternative to a car." At Fresno Schwinn, manager John Pulido said the store only had two e-bikes on hand, a men's bike selling for \$1,800 and a women's for \$2,800. He wasn't aware of the incentive program, but he said it was likely to bring a boost in sales.

Loree McKinney at Trek Bicycle Sunnyside, on the other hand, said the store sells many e-bikes, including commuters and leisure models. "It's a good thing, because of gas prices." He advised everyone to buy an e-bike. "It pays for itself in a year."

Study identifies best locations for electric vehicle chargers in Turlock

- By Angelina Martin
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The Stanislaus Council of Governments board on Wednesday night could adopt a study over a year in the making, which details exactly how many electric vehicles the county can expect on the road in the next 15 years and where they'll be able to charge.

As of 2020, there were approximately 2,600 EVs registered in Stanislaus County. Projections in the study, conducted by the global consulting firm ICF and launched in January 2021, say that there could be anywhere from 60,000 to over 180,000 EVs locally by 2035. In order to support the low-end estimate of 60,000 EVs, Stanislaus County would need to add 8,500 chargers of various levels throughout the area.

There are three charger types that would support demand in the years to come: Level 1 chargers, Level 2 chargers and direct current fast chargers (DCFCs). Level 1 chargers are standard wall outlets that give EVs two to five miles of range per one hour of charging, while Level 2 chargers, more commonly installed at residences, give battery electric vehicles (BEVs) 10 to 20 miles of range per one hour of charging. DCFCs give BEVs 60 to 80 miles of range per 20 minutes of charging and are more common in publicly accessible spaces.

Should Stanislaus County reach the greater estimate of over 180,000 new EVs on the road, over 21,000 chargers of these types would be necessary: more than 20,000 Level 2 chargers and over 1,000 DCFCs.

There are currently about 100 public chargers in Stanislaus County, though many have restrictions. For example, Stanislaus State is home to nine chargers — but you must have a parking permit to utilize them. When stations like this one are accounted for, there are only 38 Level 2 plugs and 30 DCFC plugs available to the public in Stanislaus County.

In Turlock, there are seven separate locations where EV drivers can charge their cars, though two (Stanislaus State and Las Casuelas Restaurant) are private charging stations. There are two public Level 2 chargers at Monte Vista Small Animal Hospital, one at Smith Chevrolet Cadillac, four at the Roger K. Fall Transit Center and two at the Hampton Inn. There are four DCFC plugs at the Walmart on Fulkerth Road.

Included in the study's county-wide charger are recommendations on where the incoming influx of new chargers should be placed. There are five locations proposed for Turlock, including two DCFC chargers in Monte Vista Crossings, one at the Valley View Center Plaza near Michael's, two in the Lander Marketplace and one at the Turlock Public Library. Additionally, two Level 2 chargers are proposed for the Stanislaus County Superior Court on Starr Avenue.

These new chargers are meant to supplement at-home chargers, the report says, and adoption of the report by StanCOG on Wednesday evening wouldn't mean the new charging sites are a sure thing. And while slower-charging, four-plug stations would cost an estimated \$31,000, larger and faster charging stations at the price of \$305,000 would be beneficial for more vehicles. According to the study, state and federal funding would help support the effort.

For information on how to participate in Wednesday evening's StanCOG meeting, which begins at 6 p.m., visit www.stancog.org.