

## **Charging stations will pay you back** *The business case for installing electric-vehicle recharging equipment*



We Californians pride ourselves on staying ahead of the curve. From our world-renowned entertainment industry to the technological innovations of Silicon Valley, the adage rings true: as goes California, so goes the nation — and the capital region is certainly no exception. Which is why it should come as no surprise that as of last week, West Sacramento is home to the region's 250th electric vehicle charging station.

With the unveiling of this newest, publicly owned charging station, located at West Sacramento City Hall, the region now has twice as many charging stations as it did just one year ago.

*Christopher Cabaldon, left, is mayor of West Sacramento. Richard Lowenthal is founder and chief technical officer of ChargePoint.*

This milestone is noteworthy because it underscores the growth in electric-vehicle

use in recent years. The Sacramento region is now home to nearly 2,000 electric-vehicle owners — nearly three times as many as in 2012. And 30 percent of respondents to a regional survey say they're likely to buy or lease an electric vehicle within the next five years.

The rising popularity of electric vehicles is great news, not just for the environment, but for electric-vehicle drivers as well. In addition to feeling better about their carbon footprint, they benefit from lower fuel costs, tax benefits, and access to carpool lanes. And technological advancements have led to the release of more efficient, affordable electric cars each year.

If the Sacramento region — and the state of California as a whole — is to continue pioneering electric-vehicle adoption, charging stations will need to keep pace with growing demand. Most drivers use what is called the electric "lily pad": they charge at home, at work, and at public charging locations to maximize their range. Which explains why one of the greatest threats to widespread electric-vehicle adoption is limited access to charging stations.

Municipalities are addressing this problem head-on by installing publicly owned charging stations in convenient public locations — like West Sacramento City Hall, where city employees, citizens, students at the college across the street, and patrons of nearby businesses can get a charge while working, studying, going to the theater or library, or shopping.

Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) recently announced a goal of getting 1.5 million zero-emission vehicles on our roads by 2025. As one means of achieving this goal, he has laid the groundwork for the installation of more than 10,000 charging locations across the state.

The private sector also is taking note of the growing popularity of electric vehicles. As more employers understand the benefits, more are installing charging stations at the workplace. In fact, more than 50 percent of the 14,000 charging stations on the [ChargePoint](#) network — the largest electric-vehicle charging network not just in Sacramento, but the world — are located at workplaces.

By providing their workforce with access to charging stations, businesses aren't just demonstrating their commitment to the environment; they are actually providing their electric-vehicle-driving employees with a 3- to 5-percent raise in the form of decreased fuel costs and tax benefits. What's more, access to carpool lanes results in a reduced commute time — just another added benefit for employees with electric cars.

Most electric-vehicle drivers at public charging stations are often looking to “top off” so they always have a healthy power reserve. That's why retailers, markets, theaters, and shopping centers with charging stations are so much more attractive to electric vehicle drivers, and why low-cost stations can be a big payoff for commercial properties.

While we have made great strides here in the Sacramento region — public policies that promote electric-vehicle adoption, businesses installing charging stations, and consumers purchasing electric vehicles — we must still do more.

We urge all area businesses to consider installing a charging station. ChargePoint recently launched a lease-to-own program that makes it easy for small- and medium-size businesses to bring electric-vehicle charging to their workplace. Essentially for the price of a few cups of coffee each day, a business can offer its employees and customers electric-vehicle charging and can help spur even more growth in this important industry.

The Sacramento's region temperate climate, flatter topography, and relatively short commutes make a charge last longer and electric vehicles even more attractive. That makes a complete and convenient network of charging stations easily achievable if governments, employers, and retailers accelerate the transition to match the rapid consumer shift. And once that happens, it's only a matter of time before electric vehicles outnumber traditional, gas-powered cars in California — and then, eventually, the rest of the nation.