

Clean Energy Vehicle
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Public chargers for electric cars increase awareness, but not sales



By Justin McElroy Web Producer
Global News

WATCH: A B.C. study shows what needs to happen for consumers to truly embrace a gasoline-free driving experience. Linda Aylesworth has the details and reaction from the people who sell electric cars

An SFU professor who has studied the impact of electric cars suggests that increased awareness doesn't necessarily result in increased sales.



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School of Resource and Environmental Management professor Jonn Axsen co-authored a study after analyzing 1739 Canadian households that have recently bought vehicles, including 536 from British Columbia.

They found that while people in B.C. knew about the province's Clean Energy Vehicle program, which created many plug-in stations for electric vehicles, it didn't result in increased interest.

"When we account for the relevant factors, our analysis suggests that the relationship between public charger

awareness and plug-in electric vehicle demand is weak or non-existent,” says Axsen. “In other words, the installation of public chargers might not be the best way to encourage growth in the electric vehicle market.

A freedom of information request obtained by Global News in 2014 revealed that one Vancouver’s most prominent charging stations, at Sunset Beach,, was only being used 1.4 times a day.

WATCH: Vancouver’s electric car charging stations severely underutilized

Nonetheless, Axsen is bullish on the future of electric vehicles.

“In B.C., about 40% of our greenhouse gas emissions are coming from transportation. Electricity poses a very plausible pathway that we could move towards,” he says.

“We need to get into something where people are buying plug-in hybrids, having more and more of their kilometres powered by electricity, and eventually full electric.”

However, he says a change in priorities may be needed.

“I would think more of those funds ought to go to home charging infrastructure as well as incentives for the purchase of those vehicles,” he said.

The current range without needing a charge for the Nissan Leaf, B.C.’s bestselling electric car, is 165 kilometres.

“If you can double the range, then that increases the amount of people that would find the electric car a viable means of transportation,” says Joel Motiuk of Morrey Nissan Burnaby.

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