

Fleet of plug-in cars rolls out to Bay Area governments

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OAKLAND -- A government fleet of 90 electric vehicles is rolling onto Bay Area streets this week from San Jose to Santa Rosa, completing a \$5 million regional initiative that took four years to get off the ground.

The plug-in sedans and vans will carry building inspectors, health workers, park maintenance crews and other municipal employees working for 10 local agencies.

Alameda County is leading the way with 26 new vehicles, doubling its electric fleet. An additional 27 battery-powered vehicles are being delivered to Sonoma County and its water agency, 14 to San Francisco and 10 to the city of Concord.

Oakland and San Jose are each acquiring three new vehicles, and Fremont two, in what proponents call the largest government deployment of electric vehicles in the United States.



One of the 90 electric vehicles deployed to 10 Bay Area local governments is on display as Bay Area city officials hold a press conference at the AlcoPark Garage Plaza in Oakland, Calif., on Tuesday, July 8, 2014. The press conference highlighted the largest government fleet deployment of all-electric vehicles in the nation to date. (Ray Chavez/Bay Area News Group)

The cars will bring "immediate fuel savings for the agencies," reduce emissions and require low maintenance, said Rafael Reyes, director of the Bay Area Climate Collaborative, a nonprofit initiative of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group established in 2009 by the mayors of San Jose, San Francisco and Oakland to accelerate clean energy initiatives around the bay.

The fleet of sedans (Ford Focus and Nissan Leaf) and vans (Zenith Motors) is part of a broader \$33 million environmental project authorized by the nine-county Metropolitan Transportation Commission in 2010. The commission awarded local governments \$2.8 million in federal money for the cars, and the local agencies that acquired the vehicles paid the balance.

With a range of less than 100 miles before they need to be recharged, "the vehicles really are ideal for small or midsized cities" where government workers make short but frequent trips, Reyes said.

Oakland Mayor Jean Quan and other officials from around the Bay Area showed off the vehicles Tuesday afternoon at Alameda County's parking garage in downtown Oakland.

The Bay Area already has the highest per-capita concentration of electric vehicles in the country, but clean energy proponents hope to get 100,000 on the region's roads by 2020 -- up from just under 25,000 today.

"It also is a demonstration project to show what can be done," Reyes said of the 90 new government vehicles. "It's building the expertise, documenting the benefits, and really serving as a national model."



Bay Area city officials look on the new electric vehicles during a press conference at the AlcoPark Garage Plaza in Oakland, Calif., on Tuesday, July 8, 2014. The press conference highlighted the largest government fleet deployment of all-electric vehicles in the nation to date, with the placement of 90 all-electric vehicles to 10 Bay Area local governments. (Ray Chavez/Bay Area News Group)



Fremont Vice Mayor Vinnie Bacon, left, Alameda County Board President Keith Carson, Oakland Mayor Jean Quan and Metropolitan Transportation Commission Chair Amy Worth take part in press conference on the 90 electric vehicles deployed to ten Bay Area local governments at the AlcoPark Garage Plaza in Oakland, Calif., on Tuesday, July 8, 2014. The press conference highlighted the largest government fleet deployment of all-electric vehicles in the nation to date. (Ray Chavez/Bay Area News Group)