



US plans half-million EV charging stations along highways

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WASHINGTON — Several senior members of President Joe Biden’s administration led the charge Thursday for a significant practical expansion of the nationwide use of electric vehicles.

The federal government is “teaming up with states and the private sector to build a nationwide network of EV chargers by 2030 to help create jobs, fight the climate change crisis, and ensure that this game-changing technology is affordable and accessible for every American,” said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg outside the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

In the largest investment of its kind, the Biden administration is to distribute \$5 billion to begin building up to a half-million roadside rapid charging stations across the country for electric cars and trucks.

To rid EV drivers of “range anxiety,” there will be a “seamless network” of charging stations along the nation’s highways, said Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm.

“Most of them will have more than one [charging] port associated with them,” Granholm added.

“The future is electric, and this administration is moving toward it at lightning speed,” she said.

“Soon we’ll be rolling out an additional two and a half billion [dollars] for a new grant program with even more funding for chargers at the community level across the country,” Buttigieg announced.

Most EVs are hampered from driving long distances by the gap between charging stations and the time it takes to recharge their batteries, which have limited range. Most new electric cars can travel about 500 kilometers or less between charging stops, although some models with ranges beyond 800 kilometers are set to come on the market in the next several years.

The federal money being distributed will “help states create a network of EV charging stations along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors, particularly along the Interstate Highway System,” according to the Transportation Department.

It is estimated that nearly \$40 billion will need to be spent to build public charging stations to reach the goal of 100% EV sales in the United States by 2035.

Some analysts see a bumpy road toward Biden's clean energy destination.

"EVs do not necessarily generate lower carbon emissions than gasoline-powered vehicles," said Jeff Miron, vice president of research at the Cato Institute, a public policy think tank. "The energy needed to charge batteries comes from somewhere, and in some parts of the country, that source tends to be coal, which generates even more carbon than gasoline," he told VOA.

"Building charging stations will lower the cost of using EVs, which might encourage more driving," added Miron, who is also a senior lecturer in economics at Harvard University. "More generally, unless an anti-carbon policy raises the price of using carbon-based fuels, it is unlikely to be the most efficient way to reduce carbon emissions."

To tap the funds, the 50 states must submit an EV Infrastructure Deployment Plan by August 1, with approvals from the federal government to come by the end of the following month.

The federal guidance requests that states explain how they will deliver projects with at least 40% of the benefits going to disadvantaged communities.

The Biden White House has an initiative named "Justice40," which calls for a minimum of 40% of the federal funds for climate mitigation and clean energy to go to disadvantaged areas.

The initial \$5 billion in funds for the public charging stations comes from the \$1 trillion infrastructure law. The investment is seen as a significant contribution toward the president's stated goal of cutting carbon emissions caused by transportation and ensuring half of the new cars are electric by 2030.

"We will have to expand both the transmission grid as well as the sources of clean energy that we add to it in order to get to the president's goal," acknowledged Granholm.