

# Get Ready for Electric Vehicles – Maybe?

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Within the next two model years, several foreign and domestic automakers will be competing to sell to Rhode Island drivers the latest breed in automotive technology. Plug-in electric vehicles are the next wave in providing drivers that are aggravated by paying high gas prices a cost-saving alternative. To be eco-friendly, drivers no longer have to convert their cars to “veggie-mobiles” and smell like fast food French fries while driving on I-95. These electric vehicles that are rolling out exceed current federal fuel economy standards and produce no tailpipe carbon pollution.

As these new vehicles come to Rhode Island, our state is not yet prepared for their rollout. For vehicles currently on the road, the state offers many gas stations so drivers do not have the anxiety of running out of fuel. This is not the case for electric vehicles. In partnership with the Arpin Group, Cardi's Furniture has a charging station for electric vehicle owners ready at their Route 2 facility in West Warwick (see sidebar). However, with less than a dozen electric vehicles currently registered through the Rhode Island Department

of Motor Vehicles, the demand for the charging infrastructure is not there throughout the Ocean State. Drivers excited about not paying high gas prices have already purchased electric vehicles from outside of the state or New England region. However, the question remains about the state's readiness for a real influx of electric vehicles, perhaps as early as later this year.

Project Get Ready is a national initiative developed by the Rocky Mountain Institute, an economic and environmental political think tank based in Colorado. Al Dahlberg, who serves as Brown University's Director of State and Community Relations, independently volunteers as Project Get Ready Rhode Island's facilitator. Leading a coalition of state and local government entities, energy industry representatives, colleges and universities, and nonprofit advocacy organizations, Dahlberg's goals are to encourage Rhode Island businesses and individuals to purchase electric vehicles and provide support to municipalities to ensure the placement of the charging infrastructure.



An electric car charging at the charging station at Cardi's Furniture in West Warwick. Photo: Arpin Group

Many obstacles may lie ahead for Project Get Ready to overcome. First, as of this summer, none of the auto dealers in the state have definitive timetables for the rollout of their brand's electric vehicles. The dealers know that these vehicles are coming, but manufacturers generally have yet to show their dealerships a demonstration model vehicle or provide further information on when or how to promote their vehicles' release into the Providence area market. Second, until municipalities and private businesses start building charging stations, it is still unclear what state and local zoning issues will develop or how willing city and town governments are to develop these gas station competitors. Lastly, given the current state of our national and local economy, it is unclear how rapidly Rhode Island consumers can and will purchase a new vehicle even if there are long-term energy savings by plugging in versus heading to the gas pump at high gas prices.

Given the many unanswered questions that Project Get Ready Rhode Island has tasked themselves to solve, the need and ability to change the way in which we commute is monumental. Once our state has a suitable infrastructure of charging stations similar to gas stations or even the ability to charge your vehicle at home, Rhode Island's drivers will respond by choosing to purchase electric vehicles over current gasoline powered cars. The long-run benefit of the hard work it will take to have electric vehicles common on our roadways will be the cost savings to consumers and the decline of air pollution. We will all breathe easier one day because of the work of Project Get Ready Rhode Island.

*~ Nicholas Oliver serves as the Go 60 MPG campaign coordinator for the Rhode Island Sierra Club.*



Peter Arpin speaks at the opening of the Arpin Group charging station at Cardi's Furniture on Route 2 in West Warwick. *Photo: Arpin Group.*

### Rhode Island's First Recharging Station

Last year, Arpin Group installed the first auto recharging station in Rhode Island at Cardi's furniture in West Warwick. Since then, we have often been asked, why? Why would a moving company install this unit, and why at Cardi's?

Arpin has a rich and storied tradition of leading the transportation industry, globally, into a greener future. We have implemented changes that have reduced emissions, increased efficiency in our trucks and warehouse facilities, eliminated waste from moves, and managed the cradle-to-grave purchasing and use of all materials. We also educate our agents and vendors on all aspects of environmental management, and educate outside companies and consumers through our web-based TV show, ReNewable Now.

Our investment in the car charging station was to start building the infrastructure necessary to move to EV's (electric vehicles). Eventually, we would like to see all modes of over-the-road transportation move to alternative fuels, with the heaviest emphasis on electric. The transformation away from fossil fuel will be a staggering industrial revolution that will change the world and its economy. Arpin wants to be a leader, and will be, in this amazing transformation.

We partnered with Cardi's, as we have done so many times, because of their excellent location and ability, with us, to promote the event and get Rhode Island, its politicians, and its citizens educated and excited about buying EV's. It worked. We had a spectacular opening of the charging station, and we continue to work with Project Get Ready to take this initiative statewide.

*~Peter Arpin is a senior partner with Arpin Group.*



A Nissan Leaf being charged at the outdoor charging station. *Photo: Arpin Group.*