

Media Release

B.C.'s Electric Vehicle Charging Stations "Off to a Good Start"

(Vancouver: October 6, 2014) A growing number of drivers are plugging into B.C.'s public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, the Fraser Basin Council and Powertech Labs reported today. Over 350 of B.C.'s 550 public charging stations are tracked by Powertech Labs, a BC Hydro subsidiary, and the data show that the number of vehicle charging sessions at those stations doubled between August 2013 and August 2014.

"Over 40,000 charging sessions were reported in the first year the network has been active," said Mark Dubois-Phillips, Director of Smart Utility Services at Powertech Labs. "There were 1,684 charging sessions during the month of August 2013, and by August 2014 the number rose 120% to 3,745 monthly sessions. It's off to a good start." Daily and historical charge event data are now available on the new evCloud™ website (www.fleetcarma.com/evcloud).

The Fraser Basin Council and Powertech Labs are participants in Plug in BC, an initiative led by the Province of B.C. over the past three years to lay the groundwork for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure in British Columbia. In 2012 a provincial incentive helped public and private sector organizations buy and install EV charging stations across B.C. for public or fleet use. As a result, 550 Level 2 charging stations have been operational since mid-2013.

"B.C.'s extensive network of public electric vehicle charging stations helps drivers enjoy the benefits of electric driving and be confident they can charge up on the road as well as at home," said Environment Minister Mary Polak. "This investment by the B.C. government in our transportation infrastructure was timely as a growing number of people are now interested in plug-in electric vehicles as a way to save fuel costs, cut pollution and decrease their dependence on fossil fuels."

The evCloud™ tracking tool was created by Powertech to report charging network data publicly in aggregate form and to assist research that relates to electric vehicle infrastructure. Station owners can log in to track their own data and may also choose to have it displayed publicly on the site. It is the first such tool capable of consolidating data from a variety of different charge station providers and will help to make well-informed decisions about charging infrastructure in the future.

"From the individual station data so far, the busiest stations appear to be in high-traffic hubs, especially in urban and suburban malls and downtown shopping areas, including those in smaller towns," said Jim Vanderwal, senior program manager at the Fraser Basin Council.

Oskar Kwieton is Director of Facilities for Shape Property Management, which operates several shopping centers in the Lower Mainland that host EV stations, including Brentwood Town Centre and Lougheed Town Centre in Burnaby, Highstreet and Parallel Marketplace in Abbotsford and Jericho Village in Vancouver. "We are now seeing an average of over 50 charges per week at our sites," he said. "There has been positive feedback and increasingly strong uptake by customers since we installed the chargers last year."

Vanderwal notes that there are many quieter stations on the network that only see one or two people plugging in each week, but that is to be expected at this early stage. "The first electric car rolled out in B.C. just two years ago. There are now about 1,300 on the road and the numbers are growing steadily," he said. "We expect all stations to see more use by business travellers, tourists and local residents over next few years as the EV market expands. Communities and businesses in BC recognized early that charging stations are an important infrastructure investment."

He added new car buyers are now seeing that electric vehicles are reliable, proven technology – and a choice of places to charge up is likely to increase their comfort level.

Use of the stations will be tracked over the next several years, Vanderwal says. While it's difficult to predict the growth of electric vehicles in B.C., he says it is useful to keep an eye on the experience south of the border. B.C.'s position today is similar to Oregon's in 2012, which at the time had about 1,400 electric vehicles, 700 Level 2 charging stations and 10 fast charging stations. Oregon now has one of the highest per capita electric vehicle sales of all states, and the number of EV's on the road has increased by more than three times since 2012. Factors for this growth include the extent of the charging network (both Level 2 and fast charging), vehicle incentives and consumer interest in electric vehicles.

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