

Governor touts charging station plan

By [Paris Achen](#)

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Standing next to a 240-volt vehicle charger displayed on the sidewalk in front of Medford City Hall, a visibly enthusiastic Gov. Ted Kulongoski announced plans Wednesday to add Medford and Ashland as links in a future electric highway from Canada to Mexico.

The chargers will help provide infrastructure for a growing fleet of electric vehicles and plans for a "Green Highway." The plan is a joint effort by California, Oregon, Washington state and British Columbia to install a network of chargers on highways and interstates that will encourage use of electric vehicles over longer distances and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.

"I think in the long term, this is not only going to be a healthy decision but it's also going to be an economical decision to help balance the budget," Kulongoski said, saying renewable energy would help fuel jobs.

Plans were already in motion to install Blink Level 3 480-volt chargers along Interstate 5 from Portland to Eugene.

Thanks to \$700,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds awarded to the Oregon Department of Transportation by the U.S. Department of Energy, the project will be expanded to Southern Oregon.

Eight electric vehicle fast-charging stations are earmarked for exits on Interstate 5 between Eugene and Ashland and could be available as soon as fall 2011. The stations include Exit 174 in Cottage Grove, Exit 148 in Rice Hill, Exit 120 in Roseburg, Exit 99 in Canyonville, Exit 76 in Wolf Creek, Exit 58 in Grants Pass, Exit 30 in North Medford and Exit 14 in South Ashland.

Drivers will be able to charge their electric vehicles in about 20 to 30 minutes for about \$1.40 and travel about 100 miles on each charge.

Oregon's Interstate 5 stations are part of a \$230 million effort to build a 15,000-charger electric highway from Canada to the Mexican border, believed to be the largest project of its kind in the world. About \$114.8 million of that is federal stimulus matching money from the Department of Energy, with the other half generated in kind by the purchase price of Nissan Leaf cars and the contribution of locations from host property owners.

In the first year, the fast freeway chargers will work for only two of about a dozen electric vehicles — the Nissan Leaf with an upgrade and the Mitsubishi I-MiEV — on the market this year, said David Mayfield, of ECotality. Those two makes have a Japanese standardized plug. Standardization for the United States has not yet occurred, but that will be an important nudge for more people to use electric vehicles, he said. Smaller 240-volt chargers, which will be used in metro areas and at homes, will work on all the new models of electric cars out this year, said Rich Feldman, ECotality's Pacific Northwest regional manager.

Simultaneously Wednesday, ECotality, a San Francisco firm installing the chargers north of Eugene, announced it also would expand charging stations within the cities of Medford and Ashland. About 20 Level 2 240-volt chargers will be installed in publicly accessible locations in the two cities, including outside retail centers, restaurants and other businesses. Those chargers also can be used in homes and cost about \$1,200 each.

There are now about 400 charging stations registered in Oregon. Under ECOTality's effort, there could be more than 1,100.

The 240-vault chargers, which take four to six hours to charge a vehicle, will be available sometime after January, according to ECOTality.

Kulongoski said the state's partnership with ECOTality and local governments to expand the electric charger network are an example of how the public and private sector can work together to advance alternatives to fossil fuels.

Charging cars away from home has for 30 years been the main obstacle to the growth of the electric vehicle, according to Avista's Steve Vincent, a board member of the Rogue Valley Clean Cities Coalition.

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For information about this program, go to: www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OIPP/inn_ev-charging.shtml