

Harris unveils plan for electric vehicle charging network

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Vice President Kamala Harris charges an electric vehicle in one of the charging stations during her tour of the Brandywine Maintenance Facility in Prince George's County, Md., highlighting the electric vehicle investments in the bipartisan infrastructure law and the "Build Back Better Act" Monday, Dec. 13, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

The Biden administration released an ambitious federal strategy Monday to build 500,000 charging stations for electric vehicles across the country and bring down the cost of electric cars with the goal of transforming the U.S. auto industry.

"The future of transportation in our nation and around the world is electric," Vice President Kamala Harris said at an EV charging facility in suburban Maryland.

The \$1 trillion infrastructure law President Joe Biden signed last month authorizes a nationwide network of charging stations and sets aside \$5 billion for states to build them, including \$63 million for Maryland. The law also provides an additional \$2.5 billion for local grants to support charging stations in rural areas and in disadvantaged communities.

Biden's \$2 trillion social and environmental policy bill, now pending in the Senate, includes a \$7,500 tax credit to lower the cost of electric vehicles.

"We want to make electric vehicles accessible for everyone," Harris said. "Absolutely make it accessible for everyone and easy. Just like filling up your car with gas."

The auto industry already is moving toward electric vehicles, Harris added: "We need to make the shift faster and make sure it is driven by the United States."

When public chargers are installed in rural, urban or suburban neighborhoods, "we make it easier for people to go electric," Harris said, adding that the biggest barrier most people cite to buying an electric car is "figuring out where and how to charge it."



Vice President Kamala Harris charges an electric vehicle in one of the charging stations during her tour of the Brandywine Maintenance Facility in Prince George's County, Md., highlighting the electric vehicle investments in the bipartisan infrastructure law and the "Build Back Better Act" Monday, Dec. 13, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

People who live in apartments may not have a private driveway where they can install a plug, she said, while rural residents may have to drive miles to the nearest charger.

Harris visited a maintenance facility in Brandywine, just outside Washington, where she received a demonstration of how chargers work and learned about a plan to electrify the government fleet in Maryland's Prince George's County.

"There's no sound or fume!" Harris exclaimed as she charged one of the county's vehicles. "How do I know it's actually working?" she asked with a laugh.

The car is fully charged when the display is a steady green, said Mahidhar Reddy, CEO and founder of SemaConnect, a Maryland company that made the charging station.

The new EV charging strategy establishes a joint electric vehicles office between the federal Energy and Transportation departments; issues guidance and standards for states; and ensures consultations with manufacturers, state and local governments, environmental justice and civil rights groups, tribes and others, the White House said.



Vice President Kamala Harris speaks during a visit to the Brandywine Maintenance Facility in Prince George's County, Md., highlighting the electric vehicle investments in the bipartisan infrastructure law and the "Build Back Better Act" Monday, Dec. 13, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

The two departments also will launch an advisory committee on electric vehicles that officials hope will be up and running early next year.

Accelerated adoption of [electric vehicles](#) for personal cars and commercial fleets would help achieve Biden's goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050 while creating thousands of jobs, the White House said.

The effort also is intended to help the U.S. leapfrog China in the plug-in EV market. Currently, the U.S. market share of plug-in electric vehicle sales is one-third the size of the Chinese EV market.

Biden has set a goal that electric cars and trucks account for half of new vehicles sold by 2030.

The LMC Automotive consulting firm expects U.S. sales of new fully electric vehicles to hit nearly 400,000 this year, almost double last year's figure. EVs still make up only about 2.6% of sales, but the firm expects sales to grow to more than 730,000 next year and more than 2 million by 2025.



Vice President Kamala Harris, left, and Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei, (unseen) attend a news conference, Monday, June 7, 2021, at the National Palace in Guatemala City. Harris on Monday, Dec. 13, 2021, is announcing \$1.2 billion in commitments from international businesses to support the economies and social infrastructure of Central American nations, as she works to address what the White House terms the "root causes" of migration to the U.S. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin, File



President Joe Biden speaks during a visit to the General Motors Factory ZERO electric vehicle assembly plant, Wednesday, Nov. 17, 2021, in Detroit. Credit: AP Photo/Evan Vucci



Vice President Kamala Harris speaks next to an electric vehicle and a charging station during her tour of the Brandywine Maintenance Facility in Prince George's County, Md., highlighting the electric vehicle investments in the bipartisan infrastructure law and the "Build Back Better Act" Monday, Dec. 13, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

Even at 2 million, EV sales still would be only about 12% of U.S. new vehicle sales.

Republicans, including some who voted in favor of the new infrastructure law, have criticized Biden for being preoccupied with electric vehicle technology when Americans are contending with a spike in gasoline and natural gas prices.

Republicans and Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., also criticize a proposal in the Democratic bill that would offer an additional \$4,500 tax credit for a vehicle made at a U.S. plant that operates under a union-negotiated collective bargaining agreement. Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, called the plan a "handout to union bosses" that would penalize car makers with non-union workers.

Biden last month ordered a record 50 million barrels of oil released from America's strategic reserve, in coordination with other major energy consuming nations. Gas prices have fallen in recent weeks as fears grow of another possible economic slowdown from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

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