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Case Study: EV Outreach Through Community—Events in Fridley

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CITY

Fridley, MN

TIMELINE

2016 to July 2019

WHO WAS INVOLVED

The City of Fridley and its community

COST AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

No additional costs required. The return on investment is that more residents are interested in buying electric vehicles (EVs)!

GREENSTEP CITY BEST PRACTICE RELATED TO THE PROJECT

6.5 – Adopt climate mitigation and/or energy independence goals and objectives in the comprehensive plan or in a separate policy document and include direct implantation recommendations such as becoming an EV-ready city.

Project Description

The City of Fridley is working to increase electric vehicle (EV) adoption in the community by showcasing EVs at events. Increasing EV adoption would help to meet the city's goals in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.

Project Highlights

- By showcasing EVs at community events, Fridley has found success in educating the community about their benefits.
- Fridley has received positive comments from community members attending events.
- Working with EV owners in the community has increased the educational impact of Fridley's events.



Background

During the 2040 comprehensive planning process, the City of Fridley began exploring ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. At first, the city focused on promoting non-motorized transportation and public transportation, but as electric vehicle (EV) ownership became more feasible and practical in Fridley, the city realized that EV adoption in both the municipal and residential fleets is essential for reducing transportation-based emissions.

To encourage EV adoption in the community, Fridley joined Cities Charging Ahead! (led by the Great Plains Institute and Clean Energy Resource Teams) and Xcel Energy's Partners in Energy. The city also began working with local EV owner groups to include EV awareness messaging in many city events. Fridley had EV owners at the last two annual environmental fun fairs, featured EVs in parades and other auto show events, and is planning to host a ride and drive in 2019. Having EV owners present at these events has provided the City of Fridley an opportunity to share the benefits of EVs in a peer setting and enables attendees experience EVs in their community.

Lessons Learned

The City of Fridley had an incredibly positive experience working with the Minnesota Electric Vehicle Owners group, an organization for EV owners in Minnesota to meet and discuss EV ownership. Having enthusiastic community members who can advocate for driving electric spreads the message very effectively, and city residents learning from their peers has proven very effective for promoting and normalizing EVs. Another important lesson is that including EV demonstrations and messaging can easily be

included in almost any community event. While ride and drives are preferable for EV education, simply having an EV available and an EV owner to interact with during other kinds of city or community gatherings also spreads the message and raises awareness.

Challenges

Insurance requirements, or questions about liability, can sometimes be tricky for cities to navigate when hosting a ride and drive event on their own, which includes EV test drives. Contracting with other organizations like Drive Electric Minnesota and Midwest Evolve to organize a ride and drive can often ease these concerns. The City of Fridley is currently exploring solutions.

"I think the openness to EVs has been really surprising. A lot of people seem to be almost there. It's neat when you start talking with someone about electric passenger vehicles and they're already 10 miles ahead talking about how great electric buses or trucks will be."

- Rachel Workin, City of Fridley

With modern body styles, EVs can be difficult to recognize as being electric to the untrained eye, so Fridley has had trouble getting people to realize that there is a special event happening. To draw attention to the EVs on display, EV owners have found success with banners and showcasing some of the neat features of EVs like the front-trunks on Tesla. They often perform charging demonstrations as well.

Surprises Along the Way

People are very open to EVs. There are many cases where the barrier to someone seriously considering purchasing an EV has more to do with a lack of knowledge about EVs rather than concerns about the vehicle itself. Once people know about EVs, many talk about how great electric trucks and buses will be, and they realize how much potential there is for the future of vehicle transportation.

Advice for Other Cities

Cities are in a great position to facilitate information and make connections. The City of Fridley was able to find passionate EV owners in the community and invite them to different events to share their knowledge. It is generally easy to incorporate EV awareness into any kind of city event. If there are EV owners in your community, reach out to them, and get involved with sharing their experience. While a ride and drive event is preferable, having even one EV owner display and speak about their EV experience can transform any kind of community event into an EV educational opportunity.

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Clean Energy Resource Teams, www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org

Drive Electric Minnesota, www.driveelectricmn.org

Great Plains Institute, www.betterenergy.org

CONTACT INFORMATION

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