

# Electric Vehicles Growing Option for Valley Residents in Disadvantaged Areas

*By Katelyn Roedner Sutter and Jose Marin*

The San Joaquin Valley is starting a shift that will help our economy, our air quality, and our most disadvantaged communities. We want Valley residents to know that electric vehicles are quickly becoming a viable option for all families and can save money while improving air quality.

The Valley has been caught in a cycle with electric vehicles that has left the region stuck with one of the lowest rates statewide of electric vehicle ownership as well as electric vehicle charging options. The small number of electric vehicles locally has meant low demand for charging, which has slowed the pace of adding more charging stations, and the lack of widespread options for charging likely discourages car shoppers from choosing electric vehicles. At the same time, many lower-income families are priced out of the electric vehicle market altogether.

However, solutions are developing which could ultimately create some real economic benefits for our region, including disadvantaged communities.

Programs from the state, investor-owned utilities, and the Valley Air District plan to add hundreds of EV charging stations to all areas of the Valley. For example, based on a plan pending approval by the California Public Utilities Commission, Pacific Gas and Electric Co. has proposed installing 7,500 charging stations in its service territory, which could result in 1,000 or more in the San Joaquin Valley, including in disadvantaged communities.

In addition to the hundreds of additional charging stations expected from the state and Valley Air District, this could result in several EV charging stations per square mile in the heavily traveled population centers in the Valley. Convenient EV charging at that scale would make electric vehicles a viable option for all local residents to save a lot of money on their commute costs.

Newly available state and local programs are using electric vehicle incentives to create real results for the local residents who need it most. Jerome, a Stockton resident, recently used down payment incentives from the California Air Resources Board's Enhanced Fleet Modernization Program to replace his 1989 pickup with a 2012 Nissan Leaf battery electric vehicle. He recently joined Assemblyman Jim Cooper of Elk Grove to testify at the state Capitol about how this simple switch has changed his life in profound ways.

In the seven months since Jerome switched to an electric vehicle, he has not had to buy gasoline. Since electric vehicles don't even need oil changes, he has spent nothing on maintenance. He qualifies for the CARE low-income utility program, so his electric bills have not had a noticeable increase. His savings on fuel and maintenance have offset his monthly finance payment. Thanks to the state's generous down payment incentive, Jerome will own his Leaf outright in 40 more months, having avoided a substantial amount of fuel costs and air emissions along the way.

This has worked so well for him and his wife, they've encouraged three of their neighbors to swap their old and unreliable cars for electric vehicles. It is this kind of grassroots action at the neighborhood level that can create real change, especially in our most disadvantaged communities who are most impacted by poor

air quality. On behalf of Valley Clean Air Now and Catholic Charities, we'd like to thank all the stakeholders and elected officials who are helping to make this happen for the San Joaquin Valley.

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[Click here to learn more about the EFMP Plus Up Program.](#)

[Click here to see a schedule and learn about the Tune In & Tune Up program.](#) Valley Clean Air Now runs the Tune In & Tune Up program with funding provided by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

[Click here to see Jerome tell about his experience on Valley CAN's Facebook page.](#)