



SIERRA CLUB

LONE STAR CHAPTER

To: Chairman Terry Canales
Members, House Committee on Transportation
From: Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director, Lone Star Chapter, cyrus.reed@sierraclub.org,
512-888-9411

April 26th, 2022

EVs and Planning for the Future

The Sierra Club has been and is a supporter of alternatively-fueled vehicles including hydrogen, fuel-celled, hybrid and electric technologie. We believe that electrification of our transportation infrastructure can be cost-effective, create jobs, and lower emissions of nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, hazardous air pollutants and carbon dioxide. We have been supporters of including alternatively-fueled vehicles in various TERP (Texas Emissions Reduction Plan) programs, use of the VW settlement for electric and other alternatively-fueled vehicles, and new programs authorized under the IIJA, such as funds related to charging stations and electric school buses.

EV fees

We support assuring that EV drivers pay their fair share for the highways they utilize. With an increasing amount of EVs on the road, EV manufacturers in the state, and more and more models becoming available, funding our roads and other transportation can not rely on the gas tax and federal funding alone. We would note that the state gas tax has remained stagnant for decades and we would support raising the state gasoline tax as well. We would also note that EV drivers contribute less to air pollution than do gas-fueled car drivers, which adds to health care and other costs.

Last session, we were supportive of a \$100 dollar annual fee on EVs, which we thought was in line with the study conducted by state agencies. However, the fairest fee would be based on the actual mileage driven by EV drivers. Most EV drivers use their vehicles as urban and

suburban-based transportation, and do not rely on EVs for longer trips along interstate highways. While that may change as more charging stations are built and battery technologies improve, let's take a closer look at a hypothetical driver like... well me.

I have owned two EV vehicles, a hybrid plug-in Pacifica, which we no longer own, and currently a 2020 Nissan Leaf which we are leasing. Our two boys have left the coop, and we have one high school girl here in Austin. Since we leased the Nissan in December of 2020, in the 16 months we have owned it we have driven approximately 10,000 miles, or about 625 miles per month, about 150 miles per week. Does this seem correct?

Yes, while my wife drives a larger Toyota hybrid, which we use for family trips – Texas state parks, trips to New Mexico and California or Florida to visit relatives – we use the Nissan in a radius between our home, work, McCallum High School, Promiseland Church, Sierra Club offices, the PUC and RRC, ERCOT, the Capitol, and various McCallum Band competitions and soccer games and practices, roughly between San Antonio and Round Rock. The range is 150 miles and most weeks, we charge it only once a week. On heavier weeks, we might charge it twice.

If I were using a smaller gas vehicle rather than an electric one with good gas mileage, I would be paying the state 20 cents a gallon, and if I got 30 miles to the gallon, I would have bought about 21 gallons of gas every month, or \$4.20 cents per month. Per year that would be about \$40 dollars.

Of course, because we have been in a pandemic in the time we have owned the vehicle, it is quite possible we would have driven more than we have. As an example during the 20-21 school year we did not need to drive Isaura to school because she was on-line. Still, for most EV drivers, \$200 is an unfair tax on EVs, considering they also pay electricity taxes.

Imposing a fee based on mileage during annual inspection and or registrations that would help buttress the state highway funds would be the easiest and fairest solution for EV drivers.

Planning for our future

The legislature and TXDOT should be planning for the future. We were big supporters of Chairman Canales' comprehensive bill on EVs last session, and believe creating a new plan for EV integration will be key to setting Texas as a leader. In addition, we would note the unique opportunities available in IIJA to better center equity, EVs, climate change and attention to communities that have been underserved. TXDOT should be directed to take advantage of these funding opportunities and recenter its effort away from traditional highway development and toward a multi-modal transportation model. We would also note the recent announcements from the Biden Administration that it will be asking states to incorporate climate adaptation, mitigation and planning in its use of federal funding going forward. Texas should embrace science, recognize the new reality of climate extremes, and design our transportation systems to both reduce our contribution to climate change, while adapting to it.

We look forward to working with Chairman Canales, the committee, and all stakeholder on designing a fair and equitable way to charge EV drivers for their use of state roads, better incorporate electrification into our transportation planning, take advantage of federal funding opportunities, and design a new transportation system that recognized the changing climate and works for all Texans.