

UNCA builds new electronic vehicle charging stations

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by Annabel Gibson, News Staff Writer, The Blue Banner

As electric vehicles grow in popularity, UNC Asheville has added to charging stations to the P12 lot on campus.

The charging stations were made possible by a \$10,000 grant from Duke Energy, as part of its \$4.4 million investment in environmental projects and donations in agreement with the government to end their Clean Air Act litigation.

Duke Energy wants to highlight the feasibility of electric transportation to customers, said Stacy Phillips, senior products and services manager. If they see more public charging stations, they may be more likely to purchase an electric vehicle.

There are currently an estimated 5,300 registered plug-in electric vehicles and 700 charging stations in North Carolina according to Duke Energy.

UNC and 100 other organizations asked for funding for almost 500 charging ports, Phillips said. Because of the strong response to the program, we decided first to only fund nonprofit requests.

Duke Energy required the charging stations be built and accessible to the public by Feb 1 to qualify for reimbursement.

It is our intent to make more, particularly when the new residence halls are complete, said Eric Boyce, the assistant vice chancellor for public safety at UNCA. We want to build at least a regular outlet charger for those vehicles and potentially add some more charging stations. As the need grows and as we see we can use those spaces on a regular basis without them sitting empty, because what we don't want to do is allocate a lot of electric vehicle charging stations and not have the electric vehicles to park in them.

Duke Energy is the largest electric power holding company in the United States, with its headquarters in Charlotte.

We hear from our large customers that more and more of their customers, employees and visitors are using electric vehicles and they wanted to support their charging needs, Phillips said.

The installation of the electric vehicle charging stations on UNCA's campus acts as part of the university's sustainability efforts and provides a further incentive for faculty and students to purchase electric vehicles.

We already have about 11 faculty and staff using electric vehicles on campus, but I think having the chargers, if someone is unsure as to whether to buy one, this gives them that added carrot, said Rudy Beharrysingh, director of the mathematics assistance center. They're chargers, they're free and they're on campus. I think that definitely helps people make that decision.

Beharrysingh said he owns an electric vehicle and is the president of the Blue Ridge Electric Vehicle Club, which has over 100 members in the local area.

I was working in Haywood County and I had a Prius which is a hybrid car, but I was still driving 60 plus miles a day. And I was still paying for gas and prices were a little bit high, Beharrysingh said. Then they put a charger on campus and I said if I bought an electric car then I get free charging. If that charger wasn't there I probably wouldn't have made the commitment.

Other efforts made to reduce the campus carbon footprint include the purchase of an electric ATV and an electric golf-cart for use on campus.

They are receiving a lot of use, the reason why they're located there is because we had some existing infrastructure there that we could tie into which made it an added benefit for the electric vehicle to have a somewhat covered parking space to be able to charge their vehicle under the lower level during the day, Boyce said. If we did a standalone station that grant wouldn't have covered the cost of us doing it.

The Blue Ridge Electric Vehicle Club is sponsoring an electric vehicle cruise along the Blue Ridge Parkway on March 29, in collaboration with UNCA's Spring Greenfest, which will be held on March 24 to 31.