



go!LOCAL VANCOUVER FIND LOCAL BUSINESSES

Site Index

- News Health Food Talk Travel Arts & Entertainment Dining Opinion Letters Rest Guide Community Calendar Contests Contact Us About Us Classifieds Back Issues Traffic cameras Healthcare Live Green

Features

- Health Lifestyles Seniors At Home Stars of Vancouver

Vannet Sites

- Career Education Astral Reflections Movie Listings

Community Links

- Arts and Entertainment Opera Pro Cantanti Vancouver Asian Film Festival Green Thumb Theatre

Business

- Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce Wired woman Wet Coast Women

Charities/Non-Profit Groups

- explorASIAN West Coast Women's Legal Education & Action Fund Necessary Voices Society

Park board probes city for potential plug-in stations

City considers infrastructure to accommodate hybrid, electric car trend

Sandra Thomas, Vancouver Courier Published: Friday, July 10, 2009

NPA park board commissioner Ian Robertson wants parks staff to explore possible locations at park board buildings and community centres where plug-in stations can be installed for the recharging of electric cars.

"It's a clear park board objective to green our community," Robertson said. "I feel strongly that we need to make the city more sustainable."

Robertson was to bring a motion forward July 6 asking staff to do an inventory of workable locations, but deferred it until July 20 because he was ill.

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friendly buildings.

Robertson said as far as he knows, outlets for electric bicycles proposed for the recent redevelopment of Prospect Point were never installed.

Robertson's initial motion was to come days before a city staff recommendation going to the city's planning and environment committee tomorrow, calling for charging stations to be installed in at least 10 per cent of new condo parking spaces, along with some city-owned parking lots, beginning 18 months from now.

"By 2025, 35 per cent of all the cars produced in the world will be hybrid or pure electric," said Robertson. "If Vancouver wants to keep its position as one of the greenest and most sustainable cities in the world, we need to start planning now."

According to city staff, installing charging stations during construction is less expensive than adding them later. The cost to install the stations is estimated at \$500 to \$2,000 per stall.

Don Chandler, past president of the Vancouver Electric Vehicle Association, helped prepare both the city's report and Robertson's motion. Chandler said in the past six months 18 major car companies have announced they are developing electric cars.

"These cars are going to be on the street in a couple of years," Chandler said. "And in the next six months we're going to see some battery-powered hybrids."

Chandler said all of the 2010 Toyota Prius hybrid vehicles manufactured include a plug for charging. In earlier models the car's battery was charged by the engine. He noted the focus of the 2009 Detroit auto show was heavily on electric vehicles.

Chandler said installing plug-ins is costly because their components, including the wires, are larger than traditional outlets.

For a multi-family condo, larger transformers must be purchased as well as distribution panels and "smart" switches, which control the amount of power used during peak hours when residents use ovens or washers and dryers.

Chandler said installing plugs during the construction of new buildings makes sense because the cost increases if they're added later.

"Buildings last 100 years and vehicles last 16," said Chandler. "In 100 years from now there will be no gas cars. And if the city only installs the 10 per cent they're talking about, we're going to be in trouble."

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