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Commentary

## **Commentary | Elaine Buckberg: Vermont can encourage EV adoption and create jobs, for free**

By Elaine Buckberg

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Elaine Buckberg

Not long ago, when my husband and I moved from Detroit to Boston, we drove the 600 miles twice in electric vehicles. A short road trip by American standards turned into a frustrating validation of our range anxiety.

The reason: a lack of data.

While Tim concentrated on the highway, my job as passenger was to cross-reference charger apps. One app would plan a route with supposedly optimized charging stops, but it often didn't tell me if the chargers were working. So I would try looking up each one on the charging provider's proprietary websites — a time-consuming effort that would be dangerous for anyone driving solo.

This frustrating status quo is holding back EV sales and costing American jobs. Many charging providers do not share live data about their equipment – basic stuff, like whether it’s working or broken. This discourages prospective EV drivers: Concern about public charging is the number one reason people do not buy an EV, according to J.D. Power surveys. Publishing this data is a way to spur EV adoption.

Vermont can lead the way with a straightforward fix – and it will cost the state next to nothing.

Right now, finding a working and available charger in Vermont is too difficult.

The solution is simple and cheap: If all chargers reported their status live so that any mapping app could include this basic information, drivers could easily navigate to working and available chargers. Were this data available, the chargers’ status would appear in your favorite map app, much like Google Maps shows if a restaurant is open. That would go a long way toward eliminating range anxiety.

Moreover, by shining a light on broken chargers, operators will fix them faster, enabling EV drivers to trust what their phones tell them.

My team’s research estimates that making real-time data universal for highway fast chargers would raise the EV share of new vehicle sales by 6 percentage points in 2030 – to about 46 percent – under current policies. As a result, there would be 3.5

million more EVs on the road by 2030.

That means jobs, including in Vermont, which stands to gain tourism dollars when EV drivers are able to visit with confidence.

Charging operators may object, saying that their data is available in their proprietary apps, has commercial value, and they don't want to provide too much information to their competitors.

Yet those very operators would benefit if this data helped the EV market take off faster. With 3.5 million more EVs on the road in 2030, operators will enjoy a market that is 9 percent larger. That means more charging sessions, enabling them to pay off their investments faster.

If charging providers don't start voluntarily posting the real-time status of their fast chargers, the Vermont General Assembly should require open real-time data. Massachusetts has done so, and the California Electricity Commission is proposing the same.

My team and I have just published model legislation that can help Vermont adopt such common-sense policies.

Making a road trip in an EV shouldn't be hard. And it doesn't have to be. If charging providers open access to their data, expect to see many more EVs on the road.

Elaine Buckberg leads the Driving Toward Seamless Public EV Charging project at Harvard University. The opinions expressed by columnists and op-ed writers do not necessarily reflect the views of Vermont News & Media.