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PHOTO BY EDEN TELLER
A Chevy Volt in Eden Prairie's city fleet charges at 8080 Mitchell Road. The city will soon add two plug-in hybrid pickup trucks to its 10 hybrid vehicles.

Electrifying the fleet

EP leads in electric vehicle adoption, but tech and perception hinder goals

BY EDEN TELLER
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Somewhere in Eden Prairie, two pickup trucks are waiting for the hybrid-capable components that will make them part of an electric future.

Once the components are delivered and installed – likely in March or April, according to Paul Schlueter, the city's fleet services division manager – the two Ford F250 trucks will double the number of plug-in hybrids in the city's fleet.

Transportation emissions are the largest contributor to greenhouse gases in Minnesota, said Diana McKeown. She's the Metro Clean Energy Resource Team (CERT) Director at the Great Plains Institute.

As long as electricity is still created with coal-powered plants, even electric cars

still contribute to greenhouse gases. But Minnesota's Xcel Energy already uses 29% renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, according to its website, and it has aggressive goals to transition to all-renewable energy in the next few decades.

"Then our electric vehicles would truly be powered by alternative energy," said Eden Prairie Mayor Ron Case.

LEADING THE CHARGE

Eden Prairie is at the front of Minnesota's charge to bring hybrid and electric vehicles (EVs) to the road, both at the city level and for individual consumers. The city currently owns eight standard hybrid cars and two plug-in Chevy Volt hybrids, Schlueter told Eden Prairie News, and always considers hybrid or electric options to replace vehicles in its fleet as they age out.

Statewide, the number of registered electric vehicles nearly doubled in one year, from just under 6,000 in spring 2018 to around 10,000 in spring 2019, McKeown said. Eden Prairie has the fourth-most registered electric vehicles in the state – 315, to be exact – behind only Minneapolis, St. Paul and Edina, according to data from the Great Plains Institute.

"They're in the very tippy-top of cities," McKeown said.

McKeown also led the Cities Charging Ahead cohort of 28 cities that explored electric vehicle readiness and said while most Minnesotan cities are "beginning their journey" toward electrification, Eden Prairie's goals make it a leader in the field.

"They're doing incredible work," she added.

Case agrees.

"I believe Eden Prairie is out front," he told Eden Prairie News. "If we are going to combat carbon and arrive at 2050 carbon neutral, transportation is a large chunk of that."

He's been thrilled by the support from city staff, Case added, and has done his part to learn more about electric vehicles at conferences across the state, taking best practices back to City Center and sharing them with staff.

"The ideas that are out there," Case explained. "I didn't make them up."

During a recent project at the city's maintenance facility, crews added the electric-capable infrastructure necessary to create 32 charging stations in the future, Schlueter

Electric to 10 >

ELECTION

Results are in
Eden Prairie School Board race

Page 3 >

COMMUNITY

Veterans Day

Local events to honor those who served

Page 10 >

PHOTOS

Halloween on the Mall

EP gets dressed up

Page 11 >

SPORTS



Eagles fly
Boys cross-country team 2nd at state

Page 13 >

INDEX

OPINION.....	6
CONNECT.....	7
OBITUARIES.....	8
SPORTS.....	13
CLASSIFIEDS.....	17
CALENDAR.....	21

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