Gas-fueled vehicles are being phased out. Here are 5 ways Oregon can prepare

"Driving an electric car in the Pacific Northwest is like paying $1 per gallon for gas while producing emissions comparable to a gas car getting 107 miles per gallon."

Dec 28, 2022

The "Electric Avenue" charging station located in front of PGE's downtown Portland headquarters.

On Dec. 19, the Environmental Quality Commission in Oregon and the Department of Ecology in Washington took an important step in passing the Advanced Clean Car II (ACC II) rules. ACC II strengthens the region's vehicle emission standards for all new light-duty cars starting in 2026 so that by 2035 100% of new cars sold must be zero-emission vehicles.

Oregon and Washington join Massachusetts, New York, California and a growing list of states banning the sale of new gas cars after 2035.

Phasing out new gas car sales by 2035 may seem ambitious, but most car companies have already committed to similar targets. Companies as diverse as General Motors and Jaguar have announced they will no longer sell gasoline cars after 2035. Cadillac and Volvo will be entirely electric by 2030. In Europe, Ford will be 100% electric by the end of 2026.

This gradual approach will increase the availability of new and used EV options in Oregon and Washington over the coming decade. It will not take away anyone's gasoline-fueled vehicles. This is an essential step to increasing equitable access to electric vehicles.

Today's announcement is a great win for our region, our environment and our families. Thanks to our region's cheap and clean electricity, driving an electric car in the Pacific Northwest is like paying $1 per gallon for gas while producing emissions comparable to a gas car getting 107 miles per gallon.

To ensure a smooth and equitable transition to electric transportation, policymakers, industry and other partners need to work together and invest in several complementary programs:

Diversify models

Automakers are making an increasingly diverse array of electric cars, trucks and SUVs, and they need to continue to expand options for consumers. We also need to get through the current supply chain crunch so that electric vehicles are more readily available without long wait times.

Engage consumers

Research by Consumer Reports recently found only 7% of Americans have ever driven an electric car. We can't expect consumers to embrace new technology for one of their most expensive purchases unless they have more information and experience first. States and electric utilities need to increase funding for brand-neutral consumer engagement and outreach about electric vehicles, charging and incentives, as well as opportunities to experience these vehicles through carshare programs and similar initiatives.

Create financial incentives

Most consumers buy cars based on their upfront purchase price, not their total cost of ownership, so we will need rebates to reduce those upfront costs for a few more years. We also need more affordable loan and financing programs for electric vehicles.

Invest in a wide range of charging solutions

We need to ensure convenient, affordable charging for long road trips, for people who live in apartments and at workplaces. Federal funding needs to be spent well and matched by utility and state funds to ensure charging is not a barrier to electric vehicle access.

Center equity

Throughout all these programs and investments, we need to design programs around rural communities and frontline communities of color who will otherwise face the greatest barriers to going electric. This kind of program design will result in an easier transition for all drivers, and ensure no communities are left behind.

Oregon and Washington have taken an important step towards a cleaner, more affordable transportation system. They should be congratulated, but now we all need to get to work – this is a marathon, not a sprint.