



## **Forth Launches CRuSE Program**

*Offering electric vehicles for community carsharing services in Hood River.*

June 8, 2021

### **For Immediate Release**

HOOD RIVER, Ore. – [Forth](#) is launching [The CRuSE Project](#), a program for community carsharing in Hood River, beginning June 8, 2021. Residents and visitors will have access to five Honda Clarity Electric vehicles throughout Hood River at affordable housing sites, the city center, and tourist areas.

[The Clean Rural Shared Electric Mobility \(CRuSE\) Project](#) is a three-year program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's Vehicle Technologies Office to demonstrate a financially sustainable model for plug-in electric vehicle (PEV) carsharing in rural communities.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony by the program partners and Hood River Mayor, Kate McBride, is scheduled at Hood River Fire Department at 11 AM on June 24. Media is encouraged to attend.

"The Hood River region took an affirmative leadership role in Climate Change action when it adopted the Hood River Energy Plan in 2017," said Hood River Mayor, Kate McBride. "Hosting a pilot program to test shared electric vehicle use in rural communities is one more example of Hood River taking this leadership role seriously. The City is excited to partner with the other local agencies providing charging locations for this project and hope it proves a successful model for the rest of the country to emulate."

Two cars will be placed on City of Hood River property and one will also be utilized by City employees for business-related travel. A third car will be placed near the waterfront area of Hood River to provide easy access for tourists visiting the Columbia Gorge. Beginning in June, the public is invited to begin reserving these vehicles at the following locations: Columbia Parking Lot, Hood River Fire Station, and along the waterfront near the Gorge Paddling Center.

The final two cars will be placed at affordable housing sites in Hood River owned by Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation, which includes low-income and non-English speaking residents. These vehicles will be available to reserve later this summer.

"The CRuSE project will increase access to clean mobility options in Hood River while introducing electric vehicle carsharing to the rural landscape," said Forth's Kelly Yearick. "We've designed the program to reduce barriers to participation that might exist but will constantly seek feedback from the community to refine and improve the program."

Forth is partnering with [Pacific Northwest National Laboratory](#) (PNNL) to evaluate the affordability and environmental gains of a sustainable, rural-focused, ridesharing platform. [PNNL data analysts](#) will track usage and cost over time and create models that will improve efficiency and inform the team how to optimize the program. Best practices gleaned from this project supported with data collection and analysis will be shared with other rural communities for replication.

"There will be a continuous feedback process with the project partners over that time to get it right for this current and future rural carsharing programs," said Katie Wolf, PNNL's project manager in the CRuSE program.

This project is made possible with contributions, collaboration and input of many local organizations including Columbia Area Transit, Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation, Pacific Power, the Hood River County Energy Council, local governments, and Mid-Columbia Economic Development District staff.

[OpConnect](#) is providing the EV charging infrastructure for the program. "OpConnect will collect and share valuable data with partners, allowing us all to discover opportunities for improvement while helping Hood River meet its sustainability and equity goals," said Dexter Turner Founder and CEO of OpConnect.

[Envoy Technologies](#) provides [the carsharing platform](#) that enables users to reserve and access vehicles via a smartphone, paying by the minute or hour, and returning the car to its home base. Envoy will provide a Spanish translation of its app to appeal to diverse community members, alternate payment mechanisms to meet the needs of those without access to credit cards or bank accounts, and tiered pricing structures, enabling different prices to be charged and subsidies offered to different user groups. To lower barriers to entry for affordable housing residents, iPads will be placed in a secure common area to allow residents without access to internet or smartphones the ability to reserve reservations. Honda is providing the electric vehicles free of charge for the project.

"Envoy's mission has always been to make the electric mobility revolution inclusive and equitable. Therefore, we are very excited to partner with Forth and its many partners on this e-mobility project that will impact the region," said Aric Ohana, Envoy Co-founder and CEO.

[Pacific Power](#), the local utility, is providing technical support as well as \$100,000 in funding for the project through the Oregon Clean Fuels Program.

"The CRuSE program is a great example of multiple agencies coming together and developing creative solutions to strengthen a community," said Etta Lockey, Vice President, Regulation, Customer and Community Solutions at Pacific Power. "This pilot program and its intended goals align with many of the transportation electrification initiatives Pacific Power is currently supporting to help communities across Oregon. We have high hopes the CRuSE program will provide ready access to clean transportation in other rural areas in the state and we thank Hood River for kicking this off."

The project team is taking extra precautions to protect the public and prevent the spread of COVID-19, including regular deep-cleaning and sanitization of the vehicles. Users are also recommended to follow the guidelines put in place by the CDC and Oregon Health Authority when choosing whether to reserve a vehicle.

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**Forth** advances electric, shared and smart transportation. Learn more at [www.forthmobility.org](http://www.forthmobility.org).  
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