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City Considers Electric Charging Stations

By Cathy Tyson



EVgo pump at Whole Foods Market in Lafayette. Photo C. Tyson

maintenance costs.

How is this possible? It started with the Enron debacle, which ultimately provided a \$100 million settlement to go toward installing at least 200 DC fast chargers over a four year period, as

Only two public charging sites are available for the growing number of electric cars driven in Lamorinda - at Whole Foods Market and McDonalds. Aside from those locations, drivers have to go as far as Walnut Creek or Berkeley to fill up.

With potential grant money available, along with the prospect of a free charging station, eVgo, the city council considered adding up to five new stations in Lafayette at their Oct. 26 meeting.

Improving air quality is one of the goals of the city's general plan; providing charging stations supports that goal. Electric vehicles produce one-third of the greenhouse gases emitted by gasoline-powered cars, according to the California Air Resources Board. The stations would operate similar to gas stations, with customers paying for their fuel, in this case electricity.

Final locations for charging stations have not been chosen, but city staff has already analyzed electric capacity availability and received some bids on potentially installing stations at the Mercantile Building, the Plaza at Golden Gate Way, the Community Center, the city-owned parking lot near Uncle Yu's, along with the under-construction Eco Vive building near the Veteran's Memorial Hall.

There is some urgency to applying for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District grant money, as funds for the first cycle of their program were exhausted over two months before the deadline. The cutoff for the next cycle of grants is January 2016, on a first come, first served basis, according to Megan Canales, assistant planner. At stake is \$18,000 in grant funds that could be coupled with approximately \$44,000 from city coffers.

Council Member Mark Mitchell called the free eVgo station "a tremendous opportunity" and suggested fellow council members move "full speed ahead" on that option, however he also expressed concern about losing parking spaces to give preference to electric cars. Parent company of eVgo, NRG, will pay for all the charging equipment and installation including design and permitting, and agrees to pay for electricity costs for the life of the agreement, along with operation and

part of creating a fast charge infrastructure in California.

After some discussion, city leaders were unsure of charging station locations, and authorized city staffers to gather more information from Sustainable Lafayette and nearby merchants about potential sites to expedite the process.

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