

TOCAN Regional EV Network Workshop

Engagement Summary

Background

On Thursday October 24th, 2024, CEA hosted a workshop with individuals from public and private organizations from across the Thompson-Okanagan region to explore the possibility of facilitating a regional electric vehicle (EV) charging network. In attendance were representatives from local and regional municipalities, tourism associations, and utility providers. The workshop aimed to convene a group of key stakeholders to:

- Help participants understand the current context of the region as it pertains to EV adoption, EV charging infrastructure, and to confirm the scope and strategic approach for EV charging network development in the Thompson Okanagan region.

What is the motivation of the communities/entities involved? Why is collaboration important?

Economic development was the main driving force identified by the group, to capitalize on the Okanagan's tourist industry. An estimated 4 million people visit the region annually for both winter and summer activities, and there is high potential for EV tourism amongst visitors. [With 2% of all vehicles in the Okanagan electric](#), the region trends higher than other parts of Canada in terms of EV ownership.

During the summer months, campsites were identified as ideal locations for future charging infrastructure, whilst ski resorts such as Sun Peaks could attract EV tourists in the winter months.

Ensuring equitable access to low carbon transportation is also a driving factor; CEA can leverage its knowledge of design best practices to ensure that accessibility is at the forefront of each site design. For example, the group indicated a preference for pull through stalls where possible.

The group included several representatives from tourism organizations who can be an asset when branding the potential network. The group were interested in following CEA's examples of network design, where the local characteristics of a region and reflected in the title, logo, and color scheme. Creating a distinct brand for charging infrastructure can increase visibility, build user confidence, and align with the regional identity.

Options for Implementation

CEA recommends a competitive RFP process to seek an infrastructure provider who will act as owner/operator of the network. In previous experience, this approach removes a large administrative and financial burden from the site hosts, whether they are public or private entities.

What would an EV charging network look like in our region?

An effective EV charging network should cater to both visitors and residents, prioritizing locations with the highest dwell time, such as municipal and regional facilities. By integrating charging stations with other modes of transportation, we can enhance the densification of people movement and create vibrant mobility hubs that serve as more than just charging points—this aligns with initiatives like MODO, which focuses on neighborhood-level solutions. Additionally, it's essential to ensure that mobility providers can electrify their fleets, as many lack the facilities or funds for charging infrastructure. Strategically siting charging stations can also maximize investment in local businesses, fostering economic growth while supporting a comprehensive and accessible transportation ecosystem.

The network can breach rural and remote areas of the Okanagan, such as Shuswap and Sicamous, where EV infrastructure lags significantly. [Currently, Shuswap only has 2 charging ports available at the Visitor Centre](#). Indigenous representation was also identified during the session as essential. First Nations have deep-rooted connections to their land and resources. Engaging them ensures that their values, traditions, and rights are respected, leading to more culturally sensitive and acceptable infrastructure development.

To inform network design, CEA will review existing EV Charger Gap Analysis reports that were completed for the Cities of Kelowna, Vernon, and Kamloops. This will provide an understanding of the current infrastructure baseline, and opportunities for future expansion.

Next Steps

As per the conversations at the workshop, CEA proposes the following next steps for review and action by workshop attendees:

- Review of existing EV charging gap analyses (Kelowna, Vernon, Kamloops), EV charging maps (e.g., PlugShare) and identification of key gaps for the region
- Establish a project Steering/ Advisory Committee of individuals from key organizations across the region (e.g., municipalities, Indigenous Communities, Tourism, Educational Institutions, EV Drivers, etc.)
 - Develop a Project Charter and Terms of Reference for collaboration
- Convene Steering Committee again to continue with discussion of regional EV charging gaps and co-develop Project Charter and Terms of Reference.
 - The Livable Cities, Collaborative Communities event in February 2025, hosted by Thompson Rivers University, is an opportunity for in-person discussions regarding the TOCAN network.