



TECHNOLOGY HUB

PREETI UPADHYAYA covers technology across Silicon Valley.

pupadhyaya@bizjournals.com

408.299.1835

@SVBizPreeti

► PREETI'S TAKE

BAY AREA TAKES ADVANTAGE OF EV INCENTIVES

With thousands of charging stations coming online, electric vehicle sales continue to grow. Businesses and consumers alike also have been motivated by tax incentives.

13,388

number of charging spots in the U.S. from ChargePoint Inc.

Electric vehicle incentives hot in California

\$2,500-7,500

tax credit for cars, depending on battery size of electric-drive vehicles sold after Dec. 31, 2008.

10% UP TO \$2,500

consumer tax credit for two- or three-wheeled vehicles costing \$25,000 or more

30% UP TO \$1,000

tax credit for consumers with charging stations

30% UP TO \$30,000

tax credit for businesses with charging stations

SOURCE: CHARGEPOINT INC., PLUG IN AMERICA

Paving the way for electric vehicles

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE ELECTRIFIED — HERE'S THE GAME PLAN



VICKI THOMPSON



Silicon Valley is known for being the capital of innovation. It also has a reputation for freeway gridlock and some of the worst roads in the state.

To help address the problem and encourage alternative transportation options, Maureen Blanc, director of Charge Across Town, wants to get the Bay Area ready for electric vehicles, or EVs.

She's working with businesses, cities and consumers to bring them up to speed on what she dubs "the coming EV revolution."

The San Francisco-based organization aims to educate the public about hybrid and electric vehicles. This week, Charge Across Town hosted EV Week 2013, a five-day, three-city event aimed at promoting these efforts by offering test drives to the public and highlighting cool in-car technology in vehicles like Teslas. In our conversation, Blanc discusses the different transport challenges Silicon Valley cities face and what role the business community plays.

What does the electric vehicle landscape look like around the Bay Area?

San Francisco, Palo Alto and San Jose all have electric vehicle initiatives. To make them a success we need to increase consumer awareness.

For example, San Francisco is an

urban environment with a transportation policy of walking, buses and bikes. And electric vehicles are a major part of the city's transport plan.

That completely changes when you head down to the South Bay. You can either drive or take the train to San Jose. Then there's still the issue of the last mile from the station to your destination. This is where electric vehicles and car-sharing services can come into play.

San Jose also has a huge commuter problem — about 40 percent of people drive. So San Jose's main focus is to bring mass transportation into the area from the East Bay and the rest of the Peninsula. We met with the transport team at Mayor Chuck Reed's office and concluded that in San Jose, electric vehicles still play an important role in the transit solution.

Palo Alto, on the other hand, is an anomaly when it comes to EVs. The city has the largest group of Tesla owners in the country; therefore, the community is heavily focused on building out an EV infrastructure that includes curbside charging.

How do large employers and the business community fit in?

The Silicon Valley region probably has the largest workplace-charging availability on the planet. You can buy an EV in this region and be fairly confident there will be place to charge it at work. That creates incentive. More and more companies feel that providing electric vehicle programs is not just a smart environmental move,

but it helps attract employees by accommodating their personalized mode of transportation. They're offering free workplace charging, preferred parking for electric vehicles and rebate programs for those who drive more efficient cars.

What are the latest developments in car sharing services and EVs?

We have many partners in that space. More and more of these services like Getaround Inc. are bringing all electric vehicles into their fleets. BMW's car-sharing service, DriveNow, is also nice in that it lets you take a car one way from one city to another and drop it off.

In March, Governor Jerry Brown issued an executive order establishing a target of 1.5 million zero-emission vehicles on the road in California by 2025. What are they key steps to accomplishing it?

Governor Brown's goal will depend a lot on consumer adoption. We have to answer questions about how expensive electric vehicles are and how difficult they are to charge and drive. There's a lot of misinformation out there, but in fact, it's really easy to kick gas.

We want to show consumers that driving an electric vehicle is not a huge lifestyle shift. And we're not proposing taking all cars off the market. That's unrealistic. But we're saying that if you're considering buying a car in the next two to three years, strongly consider getting an EV. They're getting better, cheaper and with higher ranges.

