

Vancouver's first fast-charge station opens at Empire Fields

Electric vehicle batteries can reach 80 per cent capacity in 20 minutes

Vancouver's first fast-charge station for electric vehicles is expected to be eight to 10 times faster than charging at home.



The new Empire Fields DC fast-charge station went into operation Friday. It will be free to use, but the city is looking at eventually introducing a fee.

The new fast charger at Empire Fields on East Hastings by the Trans-Canada Highway went into operation Friday. A DC fast-charge station can charge an electric vehicle to 80 per cent in about 20 minutes.

It's one of about nine fast-charge stations in Metro Vancouver and 23 in B.C. They're part of a planned network of 30 in the province.

"There are a number of different ways people might use this station given its location by the Trans-Canada," said Malcolm Shield, climate policy manager for the City of Vancouver. "It is about range extension so that people can drive from one city to the next along the Fraser Valley or the coastal routes."

The Empire Fields station can be used 24 hours a day by any fastcharging-enabled electric vehicle. It supports both the CHAdeMO and SAE combined charging system connectors. Tesla vehicles can access the CHAdeMO connector using an adapter, according to a news release from the City of Vancouver.

There are about 250 Level 2 charging stations in Vancouver and 700 in B.C. A Level 2 charger typically takes about four to six hours to return an electric vehicle to an 80 per cent charge. There are about 700 electric vehicles in Vancouver and up to 1,800 in Metro Vancouver.

Shield said the city doesn't know how many vehicles a day will use the Empire Fields fast charger.

"With this fast charger, it makes the point that you can show up at that station with a battery almost completely depleted, and in 20 minutes you're up to 80 per cent again," he said. "It's just like your cellphone — do you wait for the battery to be completely run down before you plug it in to charge? Or do you top it up along the way?"

At the moment, the Empire Fields charger is free to use. But Shield said the city is looking at charging users something similar to 35 cents per kWh with a minimum \$2 fee per charging session, which is what users pay at other fast-charge stations.

35 cents per kWh is about 3 to 4 times what it costs to do it at home. -cjk

"Providing across-the-board free charging as a long-term policy doesn't make sense. We're going to be looking at the cost," he said. "It will certainly be cost competitive and provide an advantage over gasoline and diesel."

The fast charger can accommodate one vehicle at a time. BC Hydro estimates that the cost of charging a car battery at home is about \$2.