

What EV slowdown? Electric transition still booming in Massachusetts.

Almost 64,000 battery-powered vehicles on the roads.

By [Aaron Pressman](#) Globe Staff, Updated February 16, 2024, 8:50 a.m.



Dennis Qirollari of Newton charged his vehicle at the Natick plaza on the Massachusetts Turnpike in February 2024. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The number of electric cars and sport utility vehicles registered in Massachusetts jumped 56 percent last year, as drivers shifted from gas-powered transport at a faster rate than in previous years.

The increase, recently disclosed on a state [website](#), comes after years of effort by state and federal policymakers to encourage drivers to go electric to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And the growth came even amid challenges for the EV market, including high prices, a lack of public charging infrastructure, and concerns about limited range.

With almost 64,000 passenger EVs on the roads to start 2024, the battery-powered sector made up 1.3 percent of all passenger vehicles in the state, according to data from the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Registrations of hybrid vehicles, which have both electric motors and gas engines, increased 26 percent to almost 224,000.

The 56 percent growth in pure-EV adoption rose from a 46 percent rate of increase in 2022.

Massachusetts still has a long way to go to meet the state's climate-plan goals of 200,000 pure EVs on the road in 2025 and 900,000 in 2030. Convincing more drivers to go fully electric is a critical piece of the state's strategy to address climate change, since transportation is responsible for more than one-third of greenhouse gas emissions.

“The good news is that EVs are getting to be a common sight,” Janet Domenitz, executive director of nonprofit MASSPIRG, said. “The next step is to make them the default choice. We won't get there on autopilot. We need investments, leadership, outreach, and commitment.”

Undersecretary of Energy Mike Judge welcomed the 2023 growth and pointed to the Healey administration's effort to let consumers get rebates at the time they buy an EV and increased rebates for low-income consumers.

“We are working hard to make it easier and more cost-effective for all residents to go electric,” Judge said in an email. The rebates as well as additional funding for chargers “should help continue the momentum toward vehicle electrification.”

The EV transition will have to continue at a fast pace to hit the goals. If EV registrations continue to increase 56 percent annually, for example, the state will be about 45,000 vehicles short of its 2025 goal but would reach 1.4 million EVs by 2030, surpassing the later goal.

The Massachusetts increase in EV registrations came even as reports have suggested that nationwide [EV sales slowed a bit](#) last year. Sales of EVs increased 46 percent last year to a total of 1.2 million, [according to Kelley Blue Book](#). That was down from a 53 percent increase in sales in 2022.

Consumers hesitant to go electric [most often cite](#) higher prices for EVs and concerns about charging and limited range. The auto industry is slowly addressing the pricing issue, with lower-priced EVs expected over the next year from General Motors and Volvo, as well as EV-only manufacturers Rivian and Fisker. Ford CEO Jim Farley said his company is working on [a whole line of low-cost of EVs](#), and Tesla is developing [a cheaper vehicle dubbed the Model 2](#), Elon Musk has said.

The charging issue is also improving, albeit slowly.

While most EV drivers charge overnight at home, the state also has 714 public DC fast chargers, capable of adding hundreds of miles of range to a battery per hour of charging, and 6,202 slower public Level 2 chargers. And the state is in the process of [handing out \\$60 million of federal subsidies](#) to add charging stations along major highways and [\\$50 million for chargers in urban areas](#) and for commercial fleet owners and ride sharing drivers. Local utilities have also [pledged to spend \\$400 million on charging](#).

Domenitz said drivers “desperately need” more charging stations. “It used to be ‘infrastructure’ was a nerd-word,” she said. “Now people understand it’s literally the way we live our lives. We need more electric infrastructure, now.”

(Correction: Massachusetts rebates on EV purchases are not related to taxes.)

Aaron Pressman can be reached at aaron.pressman@globe.com. Follow him [@ampressman](#).

[Show 102 comments](#)

©2024 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC