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Southeast Los Angeles Charged Up about Electric Vehicles First ever electric vehicle ride-and-drive organized in area



Huntington Park, CA- Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) community members came together today to learn about local contaminants, the environmental justice work that the community and Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) are spearheading, and how electric vehicles can help reduce air pollution, improve public health, combat climate change and save working families money.

The electric vehicle ride-and-drive event, held during Metro's CicLAvia- Southeast Cities, gave community members the opportunity to test drive electric vehicles for the first time and learn about rebates, loan and financing options they can qualify for to make driving green more accessible for low-income communities. The ride-and-drive was organized by Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), a leading environmental justice organization working to empower low-income communities of color, and by Environment California Research & Policy Center, a statewide environmental organization, both of whom are leading organizations in the Charge Ahead California campaign.

"I'm seriously considering purchasing an electric vehicle after test-driving the Nissan Leaf and learning about these amazing rebates," exclaimed Maria Socorro Vargas, a SELA resident. "The driving was

incredibly smooth and it is even more exciting to think that I would not have to rely on fossil fuels to get around.”

This family event provided an opportunity for community members to learn about the *Charge Ahead California Initiative*, authored by Senate President pro Tem Kevin de León and signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown, to bring 1 million electric vehicles to California by 2023 and to make them more accessible to low-income communities, which are disproportionately impacted by air pollution. The Initiative has led to the creation of a suite of innovative programs to make it easier for low-and moderate-income families to ditch their old, heavily polluting vehicles and purchase a new or used plug-in car ([Replace Your Ride](#)), or participate in a car sharing program designed to provide access to electric vehicles in low-income neighborhoods. To date, more than 9,000 Californians in low-income communities have purchased an electric vehicle with state incentives, and the Charge Ahead California programs are just getting underway.

This event also raised awareness about the health and environmental impacts of burning fossil fuels. CBE and Environment California Research & Policy Center shared informational material showing that in California tailpipe emissions are responsible for nearly 40 percent of greenhouse gases and approximately 80 percent of regional smog causing pollutants. The only path to achieve the state’s important climate targets is ending our reliance on fossil fuels and electrifying our transportation sector.

Veronica Lopez, a Walnut Park resident and CBE member, thinks it is very important to continue having events like these to engage the community. “A lot of people do not know that there are programs like these where they can qualify for rebates to make purchasing electric vehicles a possibility for low-income communities. It is great to see my neighbors learn about these opportunities and get excited about environmental justice,” she noted.

The event on Sunday attracted visitors, bikers, and community members from all walks of life. There was a photo booth and face painting to engage children while their parents accessed resource tables and got to test out the electric vehicles. United Residents of Southeast LA and Youth for Environmental Justice represented CBE and shared information about current campaigns, petitions, and opportunities to become more involved.

Special thanks to Downey Nissan and the Center for Sustainable Energy for bringing out their electric vehicles and giving the community the unique opportunity to test-drive in their neighborhood. Thanks to [Replace Your Ride](#) for providing information on the vehicle retirement and replacement program. For more information, visit www.chargeahead.org.

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