

Electric Vehicles on Salt Spring Island?

Transition Salt Spring believes electric vehicles are a viable option for transportation on Salt Spring. To this end they are sponsoring a sustainable transportation forum that will explore ways to promote the adoption and use of electric vehicles on Salt Spring. The Forum is scheduled for Saturday, April 10 from 1 – 4 p.m. at All Saints Anglican Church Hall.

Peak oil and climate change are key issues prompting interest in building sustainable, resilient communities. And peak oil is likely to be the major factor encouraging citizens to take up alternative forms of transportation. Experts differ in estimates of when supplies of oil will start to decline, ranging from right now to 10 or 12 years hence but there is no disagreement that the day is not far off.

Peak Oil does not mean the end of oil supplies but does mean the end of easy and cheap supplies. Gas prices move up and move down but the trend is ever upward. The price increases will only accelerate as supplies dwindle and demand from developing countries rises.

Electric vehicles are a key component in any plan for an affordable and sustainable transportation system. Electric vehicles are ideally suited to the shorter range, stop and go driving that is standard for us on Salt Spring. The key questions are: what kinds of electric vehicle are best suited to Salt Spring and how do we promote their adoption here on the island?

There are many interesting developments that we can explore.

We already have numbers of electric bikes and scooters appearing on Salt Spring but our roads and pathways are not conducive to their safe use. How might this problem be rectified?

Neighbourhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs) have been discussed as an option for Salt Spring. There are some regulation issues that would have to be addressed but they do have possibilities.

Most of us are familiar with the hybrid car concept and we have some examples here on Salt Spring. These vehicles use a combination of electric and gasoline or diesel engines.

An advancement on the hybrid concept is the plug-in hybrid. These vehicles have increased battery capacity and plug in charging systems. The car can be charged up overnight at home and then used as an electric only vehicle for local trips during the day..

Many people view the full electric vehicle as the only real long-term solution. Interest in these vehicles is building and a number of independent manufacturers have already put vehicles on the market. Unfortunately these vehicles are expensive and do not serve most of the driving public. Now the major auto manufacturers are beginning to introduce full electric vehicles that will be affordable for the average citizen.

These initiatives are important but more is needed if we are to really get the problem of emissions and rising costs addressed. The solution may be found in conversion of existing vehicles. There are resources and kits available to assist with converting existing vehicles to plug-in hybrids or full electric vehicles. Imagine taking your gas guzzling pick up and converting it to a hybrid that will meet most of your transportation needs on pennies a day. Or converting your small truck or car to a full electric vehicle for daily use on Salt Spring. What kind of support would you need and how it can be established here on Salt Spring Island?

If you are interested in the possibility of converting an existing vehicle or are wondering how we might build the necessary government support and local infrastructure please plan to attend the forum. We have resource persons to assist discussion and electric vehicles to demonstrate.

**The forum takes place Saturday, April 10, from 1 – 4 p.m.
at All Saints Anglican Church Hall.**