



Electrification
Coalition

May 2022 – Final Report

Montgomery County Electric Vehicle Purchasing Cooperative - Pilot Phase (EVPC)

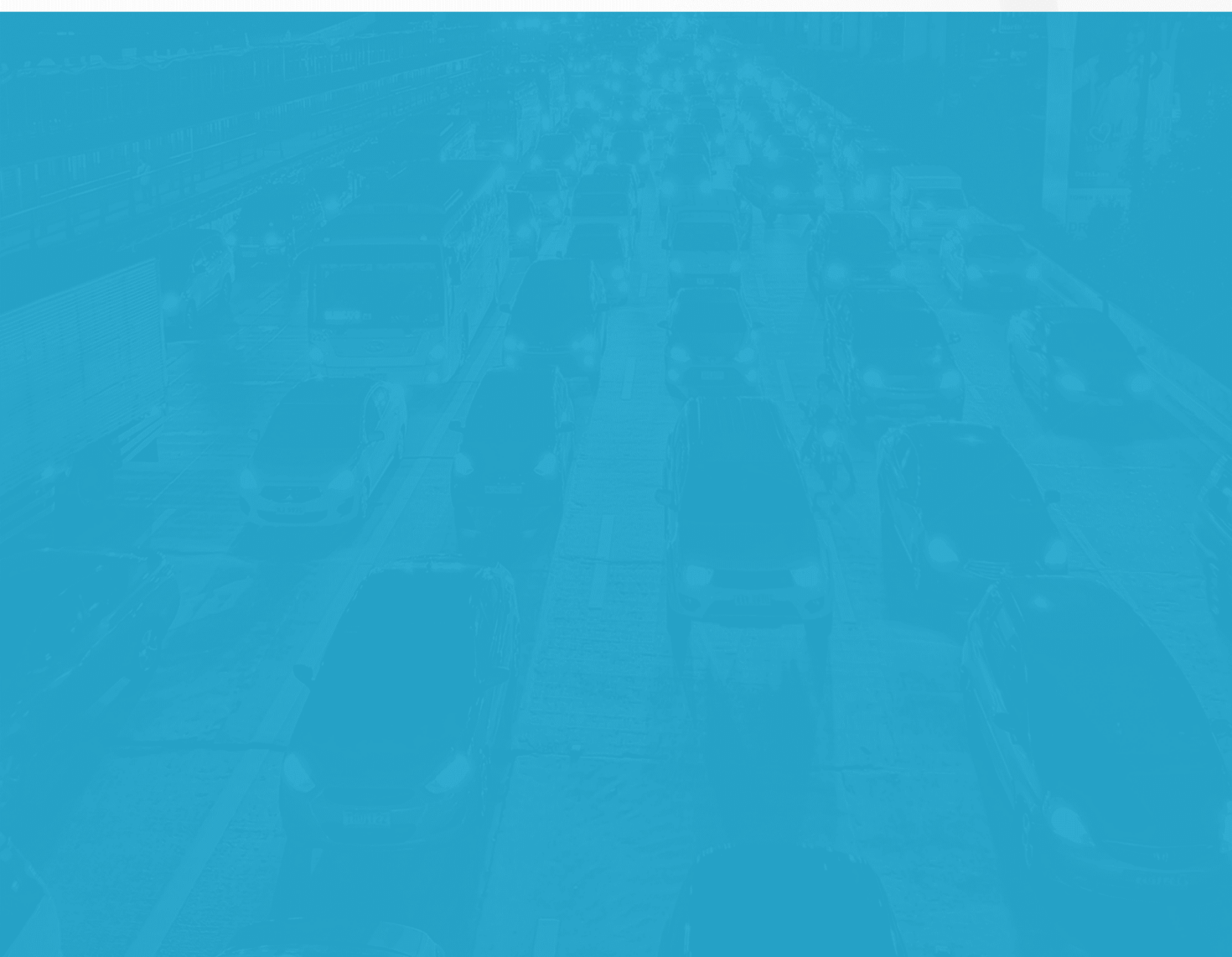


Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Project Goals and Outcomes	3
Key Findings and Recommendations	5
Project Scope: Objectives, Major Workstreams and Activities	7
Major Workstreams and Activities:	
Community and Industry Stakeholder Engagement	8
Marketing and Educational Awareness	13
Dealership and Auto Manufacturer Engagement	16

Executive Summary

Addressing climate change requires collective action from residents, businesses, and local governments to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Montgomery County has set an ambitious goal for carbon neutrality by 2035 and in its 2021 Climate Action Plan detailed how these community stakeholders can mitigate climate change by lowering their carbon footprints.¹ Transitioning from internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles to zero-emissions electric vehicles (EVs) provides a near-term, scalable strategy to achieve these reductions in the transportation sector.

Under contract with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and the direction of the Montgomery County Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Transportation (MCDOT), the Electrification Coalition (EC) developed and administered the Pilot Phase of the [Montgomery County EV Purchasing Cooperative](#) (EVPC). The original scope for this work – the implementation of a full-scale EV purchasing program that delivered bulk-purchase discounts to County residents – was impeded by prevailing supply constraints in the global economy, which put upward pressure on all vehicle prices (both ICE and EV). While there was interest from dealer groups to participate in the EVPC, market conditions meant that no dealerships had any incentive to offer bulk vehicle purchase discounts as part of the EVPC.

In light of this, the County implemented the EVPC's Pilot Phase as a demonstration of public demand for EVs. The Pilot Phase's call-to-action was for residents to sign the EVPC's [EV Pledge](#), a voluntary online commitment to make their next car purchase an EV. This Pilot Phase gave the County the opportunity to engage with the public on their desires and concerns about the transition to zero-emission vehicles; raise awareness about the benefits of EVs and how to find charging station solutions; and to begin assessing and forming relationships with community stakeholders with whom the County could partner in support of a subsequent purchasing phase of the EVPC.

The shift in scope meant that the original goals developed in the EC's proposal for this work have been reassessed to more closely align with the focus of the EVPC around securing EV Pledges. See the 'Project Goals and Outcomes' table below for more details on how the EC's approach to this work evolved in the time between the initial proposal in August 2021 and the Implementation Plan in January 2022.

The EC pursued three primary workstreams to support the EVPC:

- **Community and Industry Stakeholder Engagement** – Engaging and deploying trusted community partners to leverage their platforms and increase public participation in the EV Pledge and the EVPC Pilot Phase.

¹ Compared to 2005 levels. See [Montgomery County Climate Action Plan, June 2021](#).

- **Dealership and Auto Manufacturer Relations** – Developing relationships with local auto dealers and their sales staff as part of an *Electrified Dealer* program will enhance dealer staff’s ability to identify, pursue, and close EV sales opportunities. Connecting with OEMs² to brief them about the EVPC activities to accelerate EV adoption can help encourage prioritization of Montgomery County dealership inventory allocations as new vehicle supply returns to normal levels.
- **Marketing and Educational Awareness** – A promotional campaign to raise awareness about the EVPC and the resources available to support EV drivers: the Cooperative’s [knowledge and resource hub](#), the EVPC’s *Electrified Dealer* program, and the online EV Pledge opportunity.

Project Goals and Outcomes

Activity	Sub-item	Goal ³	Actual
EV Pledges	Residents	1,000	1,000
	Businesses	50	12
Number of Partners	Committed Partners	50	19
	Soft Commitments	-	10
	Signed Commitments	-	9
External Media Hits	Number of Articles/Stories	10	5
Newsletter Editions	Newsletters sent	2	4
	Newsletter read-through/open rate	3,000 unique clicks	982 Unique Clicks 3,377 opens
EVPC Presentations	Presentations	10	8
EVPC – Total Public Engagements	EVPC Public Engagement (website, social media, other channels)	200,000	< 8,000
	Events Attended		7

² Original Equipment Manufacturer, used in this report to refer to mass-market automobile manufacturers.

³ From the EVPC Implementation Plan

Activity	Sub-item	Goal	Actual
EVPC – Total Public Engagements	EVPC Social Media Impressions	80,000	< 8,000
(cont'd)	Total video views	-	425
Total Ride and Drives		2	2
	Total Test Drive Registrants ⁴	-	77
	Total Test Drives Completed ³	-	68

From January through the end of May 2022, the County and the EC led a campaign to promote public participation in the EVPC and challenged residents and businesses to take the EV Pledge. The campaign was achieved through virtual engagement activities, in-person public engagement, promotional support of several community partners, and DEP leadership on social media posts from established communications channels. Strong interest and turnout were noted from over 200 residents that joined the virtual EVPC launch event, with over 500 residents taking the pledge in the first days of the EVPC’s launch.⁵ This implies that the transition to EVs (or specifically, an EV purchasing program to encourage adoption) is something that many County residents who follow County communications or alerts have been eager to see manifest.

Despite a short implementation period for engaging community partners, onboarding *Electrified Dealer* participants, educating the public and promoting the EV Pledge, the EVPC Pilot Phase demonstrated impressive results. Most notably, the program met its original *Dealer Partners Committed* goal (15), alongside other marked goal progress. Which such level of dealership engagement seen through EVPC took months to secure in other *Electrified Dealer* programs the EC has administered around the country, dealers demonstrated keen interest to be a part of programming immediately. See the section on Dealership and Auto Manufacturer Engagement for more details.

Overall, progress towards the primary goal of securing 1,000 EV Pledges in this Pilot Phase demonstrates strong promise for EVPC programming, with ability to continue progressing towards ambitious goals set during this initial phase. Future phases of the EVPC could benefit from a focus on both broadening the appeal of EVs to more residents who are, at best, ambivalent about environmental impact; and deepening the support available to those who want to transition but face financial burdens to EV ownership or charging access (such as those in multi-family housing communities).

⁴ Registering for the test drive (providing vehicle insurance and contact information) is a pre-requisite for to participate in a Ride and Drive event, and the same registrant has the option to ride/drive any or all the vehicles available at the event without the need to re-register.

⁵ Less than 24 hours after the EVPC launch there were 256 EVPC pledges; there were 517 pledges in the first week of the program.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The EVPC Pilot Phase launched in January 2022, running over an initial five-month period to launch and deploy various in-person and online activation. Programmatic time was spent building relationships, educating consumers about EVs and EV charging, engaging with local auto dealerships to deliver training and vehicle demonstrations, and facilitating opportunities for EV drivers to share positive experiences with others who may be considering owning an EV. Participation in the EV Pledge was promoted at every opportunity as a way for individuals to affirm their support for zero-emission vehicles and help the County secure greater EV supply for local dealers and reduced purchase prices for EVs in a subsequent phase of the program.

Montgomery County is primed for more advanced EV programs and services, proven through high engagement during the Pilot Phase of the EVPC. This instills not only opportunity to dig deeper on public engagement and programming (while still highlighting entry-level EV awareness education), but taking next steps towards discussing equity and accessibility for EV adoption and charging deployment. This heightened level of awareness indicates that many County residents need intermediate or advanced support services to open the way for increased EV adoption. The most requested resource for EV charging solutions, for example, was a guide for installations at multifamily residential properties. It also means that residents have pent-up demand for ways to reduce the financial barriers to EV ownership.

The opportunity remains to continue building on the success of the Pilot Phase of the EVPC, driving broader, sustained engagement with residents. Key action items include building lasting relationships and developing deep public engagement that can move consumers from ‘awareness’ about EVs to ‘conversion’ and intent to purchase. Detailed below are specific findings and recommendations for overall continued success through sustained EVPC Programming:

- ***Facilitate Coordinated Group Buy EV Purchasing Opportunity***
While market limitations did not allow initial Group Buy opportunities to be secured during the Pilot Phase, continued pursuit on timing for group buy partnership with local auto dealers is recommended. This phase would leverage data from the EV Pledge and deepen relationships forged with dealers as part of the *Electrified Dealer* program. While larger dealer groups have fleet-specific sales personnel and experience responding to Requests for Proposals (RFPs), informal price negotiations directly with dealers are recommended to allow broader flexibility and ability for multiple dealers/brands to participate.
- ***Consider County-specific EV and Charging Incentives***
As consumer interest continues to grow, EV purchasing incentives can provide added push to move consumers into purchasing, overcoming the remaining procurement hurdle. Financial partners such as community banks, the Montgomery County Green

Bank, utilities, and other stakeholders can also serve as critical partners in designing targeted incentives to bolster adoption for income-restricted residents, underserved communities or considering parallel EV charging deployment project programming. With added federal and/or state funding to increase general grant funding opportunities, the right timing on county-specific incentives could help accelerate EV adoption and charging deployment at scale.

- ***Consider New Programs for Local Business and Workplace Partners***

Local business partners can provide meaningful engagement in subsequent EVPC phases. Continued engagement focused on providing benefits to commercial partners - such as workplace charging for employees/patrons and the savings benefits from fleet electrification - can provide new value to engage partners while advancing County electrification goals. It is recommended that the County leverage the work it already does with commercial entities to launch a workplace charging 'challenge' to develop EV charging as an amenity for employees. Access to workplace charging correlates with increased likelihood of owning an EV,⁶ allowing employees to be good targets for a subsequent EV purchasing opportunity.

- ***Leverage MWCOG's Regional Network to Scale Market Opportunity***

While a path remains for Montgomery County EVPC to continue into a Phase 2, including establishing specific group-buy opportunities to coordinate on vehicle inventory and pricing, opportunity to scale beyond Montgomery County is also worth considering. By aggregating consumer demand together across a broader area, more interest could be garnered from dealership and vehicle manufacturers, leading to greater economies of scale and access to vehicles/offers. Many Community Partners supporting the EVPC have networks in surrounding jurisdictions (Howard and Prince George's County, Washington DC's Transportation Electrification Roadmap), allowing continued partnership on program priorities.

Implementation of the Pilot Phase required a focused investment of time to coordinate partners and build relationships with stakeholders across the auto manufacturer, consumer, and public-interest sectors. The resulting body of knowledge provides essential context that will help the County and its partners develop and implement subsequent phases of the EVPC, culminating in a coordinated purchasing opportunity for County residents and businesses that will accelerate EV adoption.

⁶ Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy – “Workplace Charging Mid-Program Review: Employees Plug In” – https://afdc.energy.gov/files/u/publication/wpsc_mid-program_review.pdf

Please see the sections detailing activities executed as part of each of the three identified workstreams for lessons learned and suggestions on how to expand participation and improve the efficacy of the Cooperative.

Project Scope

Objectives

The imperative Call to Action for the EVPC's Pilot Phase is for County businesses and residents to take the online EV Pledge and commit to making their next car an electric vehicle (EV). Achieving the specific goal of 1,000 residents and 50 local businesses taking the pledge was pursued because of the following Major Workstreams and Activities:

Major Workstreams and Activities

- **Community and Industry Stakeholder Engagement**
 - Engaging and deploying influential community stakeholders to leverage their platforms and increase public participation in the EVPC Pilot Phase.
- **Marketing and Educational Awareness**
 - Launch the EVPC's knowledge and resource hub as a new County website hosted by DEP.
 - Demystify EVs and EV charging technology by disseminating reliable and accurate information, including on incentives and local resources available to support EV drivers in the County.
 - Coordinate messaging across various partner organizations, media channels, virtual engagement opportunities, and in-person public events to heighten awareness about the EVPC and increase participation.
 - Achieve 1,000 EV Pledges from residents; 50 from local businesses.
- **Dealership and Auto Manufacturer Engagement**
 - Recruit at least 15 area auto dealerships into a new *Electrified Dealer* program as part of the Montgomery County EV Purchasing Cooperative.
 - Organize two EV Ride and Drive events with participating dealerships to expand public familiarity with EVs.

Project Workstreams

The main components of this EV cooperative purchasing program are **Community and Industry Stakeholder Engagement, Marketing and Educational Awareness, and Dealership and Auto Manufacturer Relations.**

Community and Industry Stakeholder Engagement

Objective:

- Secure communication partnerships with County community organizations and other stakeholders who can raise public awareness about the EVPC and promote participation in the EV Pledge opportunity
- Leverage partners’ platforms to increase participation in EVPC activities and educate consumers about the benefits of EVs.

Goals:

Activity	Sub-Item	Goal	Actual
EV Pledges	Residents	1,000	1,000
	Businesses	50	12
Community Partners	Committed Partners ⁷	50	19
	‘Soft’ Commitments ⁸	-	10
	Endorsed Partner Commitments	-	9

Activity Highlights:

- In preparation for the January 2022 launch of the EVPC, the EC initiated conversations with several community organizations to secure their communications support for the EVPC. These groups were identified by their strong member-base in the County and/or their ongoing advocacy for initiatives that align with vehicle electrification: sustainability/clean energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, environmental stewardship, etc. Partner activities are described more under the ‘Marketing and Educational Awareness’ workstream.

⁷ Submitted signed endorsement letters to the EVPC, committing their organization to helping promote the EVPC on their platforms through coordinated messaging across media channels, in person or virtual events.

⁸ No endorsement letter received. Informal agreement to help promote and support the promotion of the EVPC

Community Partners

1. Bethesda Green
2. Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN)
3. City of Poolesville
4. City of Rockville
5. Electric Vehicle Association of Greater Washington, DC (EVADC)
6. Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition (GWRCCC)
7. Maryland Solar United Neighbors
8. Maryland Zero Emission Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Council (ZEEVIC)
9. Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
10. Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
11. Montgomery County Sierra Club
12. One Montgomery Green
13. Poolesville Green
14. Progressive Neighbors
15. Potomac Edison/First Energy's EV Driven program
16. Rockville Science Center
17. Spencerville Seventh Day Adventist Church
18. Tifereth Israel
19. Temple Shalom Tikkun Olam

- The EVPC's Community Partner outreach targets were considered immediate and relevant priority due to their primarily environmental focus. This strategy was preferred since the short implementation period left little runway to build strong partnerships with stakeholders who were not already mission aligned. In addition to endorsed Community Partner letters, informal ('soft') commitments to promote the Cooperative were also accepted. This was a practical option for those organizations which preferred to avoid their own formal internal review process or those which required a longer timeline to process endorsement requests.
- Community Partners were provided with EVPC social media toolkits and other marketing content to share at in-person events, with their subscribers/readers in newsletters or email alerts, and to their followers on social media platforms. Existing Partners were also invaluable for encouraging other stakeholders to join as Partners, and for recommending other partners as Partner outreach targets from within their networks.
- 'Industry' stakeholders (private businesses which provide vehicle maintenance, servicing, or other services) were also initially considered for engagement in the EVPC in order to increase

momentum around and participation in the Cooperative. No private-sector partners were secured during the Pilot Phase due to a lack of time and staff capacity given other program responsibilities.

Lessons Learned:

- There is **high recognition of purchasing cooperatives among County residents**, with several active solar panel group-purchase opportunities in the community. Many residents recognize the inherent value of purchasing discounts as part of EVPC's programming. Evidence suggests that there is significant overlap between homeowners' investments in rooftop solar and EV. For instance, Maryland Solar United Neighbors added EV charger installation as a free additional benefit for those joining their solar cooperative, since electrical installers will already be on-site to install the rooftop solar array. The volume of sales demonstrated with this collaborative purchasing program is what made this EV charger offering available from electrical installers serving the program; the County should consider replicating or otherwise supporting this strategy. Overall, subsequent phases of the EVPC should partner more closely with the County's annual solar co-op programs to promote the EVPC to these residents and their networks.
- **Municipal Chambers of Commerce** can provide good exposure to local businesses, but developing these relationships can take time. Montgomery County's Community Support Services (CSS) is one of several County agencies that engages with local Chambers and member-businesses frequently, and which may have an interest aligned with the EVPC. Time is needed to attend Chamber events, but yields advantage of speaking and networking opportunities. If available, sub-chamber working groups or focus areas like sustainability, energy or energy efficiency may be better targets.
- **Consider Financing Partners**, such as the Montgomery County Green Bank, to provide enhanced information about their favorable financing options and programs to support EV charging equipment purchase and installation. Given this existing programming, the Green Bank is able to connect with local installers of EV charging equipment. The Green Bank's status in the Clean Energy Credit Union's Field of Membership provides a way for County residents to access some of the lowest financing rates in the country to support EV ownership. The Green Bank's work with County businesses can also help identify and convene commercial interests who are actively making clean energy investments – a great audience for the County to engage on fleet electrification.
- The EC's original proposal included the development of targeted media content (Letters to the Editor, placed articles, radio spots) to promote the EVPC, but limited staff capacity with which to cover other responsibilities during the short implementation period was a barrier to

completing this task. However, news of the EVPC organically appeared in print at least once (a business-focused magazine) and was also translated into Spanish and published in the *Washington Hispanic* newspaper. This indicates **interest from business stakeholders and diverse communities to promote the transition to EVs**. This is an opening for the County to tap into both a broader base of support and more targeted promotion of the EVPC. A focus on communications capacity will help provide the required effort needed for these tasks.

Reference External Media	Media Outlet	Date of Publication
Print	The Greater Olney	January 28 th , 2022
Web	Maryland Association of Counties	January 20 th , 2022
	My Montgomery County Media (MCM)	January 20 th , 2022
	Source of Spring	January 20 th , 2022
	Washington Hispanic	February 2 nd , 2022

Recommendations:

- **Invest time in building Partner relationships.** Ongoing content creation and regular communication ‘check-ins’ are needed to develop shared vision on programming, deepening relationships and opening access to new networks. The call-to-action in this Pilot Phase was virtual in nature, and therefore public engagement depended heavily on Partners continually sharing EVPC content with their subscribers. While a relatively small ask, it does take effort for Partners to work external content into their social media schedules. The County is encouraged to reciprocate with their Partners where applicable, especially when they can bring the full ‘weight/authority’ and resources of the local government to bear in support of a common community cause.
- **Create consistent messaging and align Partner talking points.** Enthusiastic partners, especially those well-versed in EVs, may lean too far into their technical knowledge when engaging with the public. This may confuse or isolate people and have the opposite effect than was intended. Focus on talking points highlighting the fun EV driving experience, the total cost of ownership (TCO) savings, ease of use/saving time and cost on maintenance and refueling and reduced environmental impact. Review these messages with Partners as necessary.

- **Track Partner communications channels for evidence of media activity in line with their commitment.** Follow-up on Partners' communications commitments (as per their endorsed letters) can help ensure that Partners are leveraging their platforms in good faith to promote the EVPC. This is especially true for organizations that gave 'soft' commitments. Subscribing to Partners' newsletters/ mailing lists/ social media feeds is an easy way to track their follow-through on commitments and dedicated social media or communications staff can also provide capacity to not only stay abreast of Partners' social media activity but also interact with/respond to it in a timely way which can generate momentum around posts.
- **Many State and County elected officials are vocal about their support for EVs** and have large bases in Montgomery County. The EVPC Pilot Phase launched with the County Executive challenging residents to take the EV Pledge. He is one of many elected officials who support the initiative and can mobilize their base to promote the program.
- **Connect businesses' current emission-reductions efforts to fleet electrification and workplace charging.** The Green Business Certification Program is a natural place to start. Other private-sector targets for outreach to commercial entities include longtime County business partners the U.S. Green Buildings Association (National Capital Region), and the National Association for Industrial and Office Parks (NAIOP)'s Sustainable Development Committee.
- **Engage with other businesses in the vehicle servicing and maintenance sector about participating in a subsequent phase of the EVPC.** While EVs require less maintenance overall, regular servicing is still advised and helps prolong the life of the investment. It is anticipated that, like dealerships, businesses that provide services related to tires or car cleaning/detailing will welcome the chance to be recognized as an entity connected to and supportive of vehicle electrification.

Marketing and Educational Awareness

Objective:

- Launch the EVPC’s [knowledge and resource hub](#); Demystify EVs and EV charging technology by disseminating reliable and accurate information, including available incentives and local resources to support new and current EV drivers in the County.
- Coordinate messaging across various partner organizations, media channels, virtual engagement opportunities, and in-person public events to heighten awareness about the EVPC, address concerns, and increase participation.
- Promote the EVPC’s EV Pledge and encourage County residents and businesses to participate.

Goals:

Indicator	Sub-Item	Goal	Actual
Pledges	Residents	1,000	1,000
	Businesses	50	12
Web hub visitors		N/A	-
External Media Mentions		10	5
Webinar/Presentations and in-person events		10	8
Newsletters	Total Produced	2	4
	Read/Click-through rate	3000 Unique Clicks	Click-through rate of 27% and 63% open rate with 982 unique clicks across 4 newsletters

Activity Highlights:

- Activities under this workstream included developing content to educate consumers/partners about the EVPC and tracking public engagement with that content. The EVPC’s [knowledge and resource hub](#) was designed as a clearinghouse for trusted, objective information about the benefits of transitioning to EVs; best practices for EV driving, charging, and installations; and the latest hyper-local details on how residents can transition to EVs conveniently and cost-effectively.
- Campaign collateral developed to support ‘Marketing and Educational Awareness’ includes: an **EVPC overview slide deck** for virtual engagements detailing the purpose and structure of

the EVPC; **Partner/Dealer Packets** to outline committed scopes of engagement; **branded promotional products and materials** to support in-person engagements; **social media toolkits** to promote new program content; an **EV Buyers' Guide** comparing the cost, range, and approximate charge times of all EVs and plug-in hybrid EVs (PHEVs) available for purchase; and an **At-Home Charging Guide** to help increase familiarity with the demands of the technology.

- The centerpiece of the Pilot Phase was a virtual **EV Pledge** - a call to action to accelerate engagement - which participants used to voluntarily commit themselves to the purchase of an EV for their next car. Public participation in the Pledge was used to directly connect residents with *Electrified Dealers*. The EV Pledge also started to quantify demand for EVs in the County, informing the County government's next steps towards negotiating EV purchase discounts for participating residents.
- Unique online **video content** was also created to raise awareness about public charging available at various sites in the County, how to use them, and how to calculate EV charging costs and savings. An 'EVPC value proposition' video was also produced to address concerns about the purpose of the EVPC in the absence of EV purchase incentives. This unique content was shared with EVPC Communications Partners in weekly social media packets during March and April to promote the EVPC's resources and direct visitors to the EV Pledge.
- The County also published **four** editions of an **EVPC-focused newsletter** which EV Pledge-takers could opt-in to receive. This is a good way to connect future EV drivers to the resources available at the County to support their transition and foster a sense of community. EV owners value this sense of community perhaps even more than members of traditional 'car clubs.' There are numerous online forums in which EV drivers share experiences/wins, tips/tricks, and support each other on vehicle and equipment purchases. These discovery spaces are critical for sharing information and advancing EV adoption given the current level of EV penetration.⁹

Lessons Learned:

- **Updates to the knowledge and resource hub content must be addressed promptly** to ensure latest, most actionable information is available to users. The availability and scope of utility and state EV charging rebate programs change quickly due to accelerating adoption by residents, impacts on utility operations, and limited allocated funding for rebates.

⁹ In the EVPC's first 'Meet an EV Owner' interview, the community (both local and virtual) of EV drivers is cited as a key factor supporting the interviewee's familiarity with EVs and decision to buy a specific model.

- **On-the-ground event support provided by EVADC was invaluable** for engaging the public and informing them about EVs. EVADC also volunteered time to brainstorm, develop and produce original video content created for the EVPC. The advocate community is very well-versed on the technology and happy to share information -- but this dedicated focus may lead to an insular way of sharing information that can sometimes be intimidating to those who are just becoming familiar with EVs.
- **Turnkey presentation content allows tailoring based on audience, ensuring EVPC presentation best matches audience** needs and education. Supplemental to the program overview slides could be additional content providing a review of EV and EV charging basics, or focusing on public health benefits, etc.
- **EV Ride and Drives provide the highest impact on consumer engagement.** Getting ‘butts in seats’ for EV test drives is the most effective way to advocate for personal EV adoption, but EV static demonstrations provide longer public engagement opportunities to address concerns about the transition to EVs and make the case for electrification. Since these two methods vary by the investment of time needed, they allow for variety in public engagement offerings and flexibility for needed support staff. Consider event opportunities that can be majority staffed by aligned EVPC partners as a way to increase the reach of EVPC.

Recommendations:

- **Build long-running social media presence with dedicated communications staff.** Dynamic social media engagement that connects the EVPC to current events will be more effective at highlighting the resource hub and EV Pledge for visitors. A multi-month social media strategy should also be developed at the program's start. Especially since the EV Pledge is a virtual engagement, dedicated staff capacity for communications and social media promotion will be essential to increase the public reach of the EVPC.
- **Co-create marketing and educational resources with partners.** All EVPC partners benefit from free promotion on the Cooperative’s knowledge and resource hub. Participating auto dealerships are keen to make the most of free promotion opportunities to demonstrate their leadership, new EV offerings, and EV sales expertise. They would be willing to be featured in promotional video content if the EVPC staff was in a position to lead its production.
- **Highlight the EV Pledge on the EVPC website, and give Pledge-takers the opportunity to publicly share their commitment.** This can include an option on the EVPC website (near the ‘Make the Pledge’ button) for pledge takers to share their action directly to their respective social media accounts. Wordpress and other web platforms have a [plugin](#) that adds buttons to share your action to social media with one click. This would allow pledge-takers to post

something immediately about their commitment, and [evidence](#) suggests that sharing one’s commitment increases the likelihood of following-through on that commitment. Consider small ‘perks’ for pledge-takers, such as \$1 towards digital purchases, for sharing the pledge publicly.

- **Enhance visibility of the Cooperative at the regional scale.** As contract administrator and stakeholder, MWCOG will assess the results of the Montgomery County EVPC for replicability and scalability among its member jurisdictions. MWCOG did leverage its regional online platforms to promote the program widely, but other partnerships could be fostered to promote the program towards a multi-jurisdictional EV group buy opportunity. A prime opportunity is with the District of Columbia, which is also considering how to increase EV adoption among its residents. The District has no new car dealerships (aside from Tesla), and therefore many District residents buy their cars from Montgomery County dealerships or in northern Virginia. Dealer networks like the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association (WANDA, which supported the launch of the EVPC) would also be an important stakeholder with whom to discuss the development of such a program.

Dealership and Auto Manufacturer Engagement

Objectives:

- As part of a new *Electrified Dealer* program, recruit area auto dealerships to participate in the Montgomery County EV Purchasing Cooperative; have staff complete the *Electrified Dealer* training module, designed to position local dealers as ‘EV Experts’ so they can provide the best possible EV sales experience to consumers.
- Organize and complete two EV Test Ride events (EV Ride and Drives).
- Secure OEM/manufacturer support for the EVPC through corporate engagement; Create the Group Buy program and other incentives.
- With a pre-owned EV dealer partner and targeting income-restricted households, explore methods to enhance equitable access to zero-emissions vehicles.

Goals:

Indicator	Sub-item	Goal	Actual
Electrified Dealership Commitment	Dealer rooftops committed	15	23
	Outreach emails sent	40	51

	Introduction meetings scheduled	15	10
Dealership Training	Number of Trainings Conducted	-	4
	Number of Dealerships Trained	15	14
	Dealership Sales Staff trained	30	33
	Dealer Staff contacts made	15	28
Ride and Drive	Total Events	2	2
	Total Test Drive Registrants	-	77
	Total Test Rides completed	-	68
EVs sold/ordered		400	N/A
Increased EV sales		30%	N/A
OEMs engaged		5	0
Group Buys available		3	0
Other incentives/preferential programming		3	0

Activity Highlights:

- Over 15 Montgomery County area auto dealerships expressed interest in joining the *Electrified Dealer* program during the implementation period, which is a record for dealer engagement in the EC's experience administering similar programs in other jurisdictions.
- As part of the *Electrified Dealer* program, sales staff completed a virtual training module and received supplementary information on best practices for offering next-level EV advice and sales support to consumers. This 60-minute module includes a review of federal, state, and local incentives; community charging stations; programs to support charging; and other helpful resources for customers. At least two sales staff were required to be trained to have full coverage for customers across an entire sales week.

- As part of their participation in the EVPC, dealerships were encouraged to provide EV test rides and engage with the public at opportunities organized by EVPC staff. Two such opportunities were executed during the EVPC’s implementation period: the 2022 Montgomery County Energy Summit (EV test rides provided by DARCARS dealership group), and Rockville Science Day (EV test rides provided by Fitzgerald Auto Group). The test rides provide a low-pressure environment for potential customers to become acquainted with specific EV models and (of specific benefit to dealers) experienced dealer sales staff. Dealers chose these great opportunities to show potential customers and businesses they are leaders in EV sales and support in their region – highlighting their leadership despite the perception that traditional auto dealers don’t like or want to sell EVs.

Lessons Learned:

- **Competition among dealer groups is high.** Many dealers value their reputations and public image, while also tracking progress of other dealers in the area. Promoting the participation of one major dealer partner can garner interest from other auto groups, in a way “keeping up with rivals.”
- **Local dealerships are motivated to promote their leadership, knowledge, and ability to sell EVs.** Auto dealerships value association with EV programs like the EVPC, and see it as part of the evolution of their business model. Association with County-led programming through EVPC helps overcome the myth that EVs are ‘only luxury vehicles’, and in fact positions EVs as a benefit to community. Dealerships see association with the County – providing a service that can help meet the County’s community goals – as a major benefit to their sales process and in turn, are often willing to collaborate on County requests to bolster programming. During the *Electrified Dealer* training sessions, dealer sales staff identified supplemental information about local resources for EV drivers as helpful additional collateral to enhance their engagements with potential EV customers.
- **EV ‘Ride and Drive’ events help identify dealer sales staff specializing in Electric Vehicles.** The experience of these sales employees should be leveraged to create more engaging training resources and program collateral that markets the EVPC.
- **Dealers want to keep EVs available for customers even with supply constraints.** Dealers were reserved to share monthly EV sales data with the EVPC, though no personally-protected customer information was requested. Due to the vehicle shortages in the market, dealers weren’t inclined to share their vehicle sales data – but through an evolving dealer relationship, there is opportunity for the County to build shared vision with their dealers around consumer EV adoption, and in turn foster opportunity for sharing sales and other relevant data.

- **Vehicle inventory was severely constrained in Q1 and Q2 2022.** Dealerships were not able to offer discounts on vehicles without the possibility of volume sales bonuses from their respective manufacturers. In the future, as auto market conditions improve, dealerships may be in a better position to offer discounts for a purchase agreement. They may also be more willing to discount their inventory with the guarantee of several EV sales at a modest discount below the vehicle’s manufacturer suggested retail price (MSRP). Efforts to connect with OEMs went largely unanswered; this is to be expected in the current environment as they have little inventory support to offer currently.
- **Dealerships participating in the EVPC lacked sales staff dedicated to fleet sales.** Most dealerships participating in the EVPC were focused on commuter business given the passenger-vehicle focus of their offerings; fleet-focused sales staff would not be found at dealerships who don’t already typically process fleet sales.

Recommendations:

- **Begin engagement with dealerships and dealerships associations well in advance.** Without an introduction to management and relevant sales staff, it can take time for dealerships to respond to inquiries and longer to develop a working relationship.
- **Maintain frequent communication with dealer partners.** Monthly check-in calls ensure regular touchpoint with dealer partners and OEMs, and opportunity to synchronize on opportunities and the EV market. This is highly-recommended given the current market constraints – by staying in touch with dealerships on their market prospect, new opportunities can be more quickly identified.
- **Publicly recognize dealer partners for their leadership.** Many dealerships participating in the EVPC wanted to highlight that they are involved in EV charging or other renewable energy projects. This will deepen relationships and motivate dealers to invest more in the relationship.
- **Keep dealer partners aware of opportunities to participate in ‘Ride and Drive’ events.** They are motivated to provide test rides of the vehicles they offer, have their sales staff interact with the community, and share promotional products. The most attractive such opportunities for dealerships are those that have an established patronage (well-attended), are free to enter for the public, and present low risk to their vehicle insurance. As more public charging stations come to the County, consider leveraging these unveiling events as Ride and Drive opportunities to connect the public and dealers.
- **Require additional training engagements to maintain participation in the Cooperative.** In the Pilot Phase, dealer participation came with no monetary cost and provided free promotional opportunities for dealership on the EVPC website. The *Electrified Dealer* program typically requires that participating dealerships re-train staff on the training

module every six months, to account for the high rate of turnover at dealerships. This is an opportunity to keep participants (and the module's content) updated on new developments regarding EV competition, EV infrastructure, locally available incentives, and frequently asked questions. All training sessions are an opportunity to build relationships with dealer staff and field questions from new salespeople – the discussion and Q&A portions of the training are especially important.

- **Connect participating dealerships to suitable business fleets**, if the County found a way to target businesses with majority passenger or compact-SUV fleets. Medium and heavy-duty EV vendors or other providers could also be engaged to demonstrate, at the same fleet-specific event, how standard, medium- and heavy-duty electric vehicles can fit local fleet operators' diverse needs and budgets. The County's *Go Electric!* event, the inaugural staging of which was held in March 2022, could be a good fit – however, due to dealerships' competitive nature, they typically do not like to 'share' the spotlight with other rival community dealers at the same event.
- **Develop additional informational collateral to support EV sales at dealership locations.** Based on feedback from the *Electrified Dealer* training sessions, the most helpful collateral should include information comparing the ranges, prices and capabilities of available EV models. The competitive nature of dealerships means the County should consider carefully how the resource for each dealership highlights their models' advantage (in range, speed of charging, etc) over that of their competitors. Dealers also want information on immediate next steps for at-home charging solutions, such as locating reputable EV charging vendors and electricians, a general timeline for the installation process, and the permits necessary; locations of public charging locations within the County and available vehicle tax rebates were also identified as helpful.

###

