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## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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PHOTO COURTESY OF  
CHRIS FLORES



## A PICTURE IS WORTH A 1000 WORDS

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS FLORES

While the Division of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Office of Energy began receiving Level 2 Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) rebate applications in February, the April 24, 2021, ribbon-cutting for the six new electric vehicle (EV) chargers in downtown Lonoke really painted a picture of the impact the rebate program can have on a community. "Without the rebate, Lonoke would've had to pay thousands to install EV chargers," said Chris Flores, chairman of the Lonoke Sustainability Action Team. Having a program like the Level 2 EVSE Rebate program is vital." Governor Asa Hutchinson named DEQ as the lead agency to use the Environmental Mitigation Trust Funds that were a part of the Volkswagen settlement in relation to their alleged violations of the federal Clean Air Act. The Level 2 EVSE Rebate Program is one of the programs funded by those settlement dollars.

Flores reported that there were approximately 90 people at the ribbon-cutting, the first day that the chargers became operational. Since that time, Flores has been very pleased with the usage. He said, "Nine out of ten times when I drive by, I see someone plugged-in. I drive a Chevy Volt and I use the chargers all the time." Flores's Volt wasn't part of the 24-car Drive Electric Earth Day (DEED) convoy that "jump-started" the day's ribbon-cutting festivities. That day, Flores was a passenger in an "on-loan" Tesla Model 3 from EVolve Automotive being driven by the mayor when it rolled into Lonoke's Flagpole Plaza, the location of their EV chargers. While Lonoke's city government does not own any electric vehicles, Flores says that is a goal of the Sustainability Action Team. "The EV chargers in Lonoke are installed right across the street from the Lonoke Police Department," he said, "making them in a perfect spot for the police department to charge their future, electric police cars."

The evolution of Lonoke's EV chargers is interesting. "I had several meetings with the mayor [Lonoke Mayor Trae Reed] and other city leaders discussing how Lonoke needed EV charging," he said. "We were looking into working with Tesla to have chargers installed here when I saw a post on the AR EV Owners group on Facebook. It was from Adopt-a-Charger asking where the need for chargers was in Arkansas. I commented saying, 'Lonoke!' Kitty Adams [the executive director of the nonprofit that solicits corporate sponsorship of EV chargers in public places] got in contact with the mayor and that's how it all began. We had a few meetings together, then Kitty presented the proposal to the city council. They voted unanimously in favor of installing the chargers in Lonoke. While driving in Little Rock or Bentonville, likely, you will see a few EVs. It is very rare to see [them] in rural Arkansas, though. That is why I thought it to be important for rural Lonoke to show support and host an event like this. I wanted to prove that EVs are as viable in small towns as they are in big cities."

If Lonoke's success story has motivated you to take advantage of the Level 2 EVSE Rebate Program, Transportation and Sustainability Coordinator Patti Springs encourages you to "go for it. Just check out our [2021 Level 2 EVSE Rebate Program Balance Tracker \(https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/planning/vw.aspx\)](https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/planning/vw.aspx) to verify funds are still available," she said.

## NEWS & EVENTS

### GREEN TRANSPORTATION SUMMIT & EXPO

AUG. 16, 2021, 8 A.M.  
TO  
AUG. 18, 2021, 4 P.M.  
@ TACOMA, WA

ADD TO CALENDAR

The 10th annual Green Transportation Summit & Expo (GTSE) is the region's premier clean transportation convening event. There has not been a time when clean transportation has had as much potential. With this year's theme of Reflecting + Refocusing on a Resilient Future, we are giving particular attention to recent events affecting our communities and livelihood. We will create space to ensure these critical topics are addressed.

For more information, visit [www.gtsummitexpo.com](http://www.gtsummitexpo.com).