

\$25,000, 350-mile-per-charge electric car could be reality by 2017, DOE says

May 25 2011, By Susan Carpenter

In an event flanked with all the electric cars that have recently come to market, and a handful of those that are poised for sale later this year, U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu and L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa flipped the switch May 13 on the 500th electric-vehicle charging station installed by Coulomb Technologies as part of its ChargePoint America network.

Coulomb, based in Campbell, Calif., received \$15 million last year from the [Department of Energy](#), and \$22 million in private funds, to install 4,600 chargers across the country by the end of 2011. About 1,600 are slated for California, 210 of which have so far been installed. L.A. currently has 71 Coulomb charging stations, including the one installed today in the California Science Center parking lot.

"The Department of Energy is happy to be a part of this [event], but more importantly we're very happy to be really trying to push for the [electrification](#) of vehicles in the U.S.," Chu said. "The reason is very simple. We have to diversify our [transportation energy](#)."

[Oil prices](#) may be in flux right now, he said, but developing countries' demand for limited oil resources will continue to push prices higher. He noted that China sold 16.7 million vehicles in 2010 and will sell 20 million cars annually within the next couple of years. The U.S. sold 12 million cars last year.

"Because of increased demand, we've got to think of all the other things

we can do in transportation. The best is efficiency," Chu said.

Batteries are the "heart" of [electric vehicles](#), he said, adding that the Department of Energy is funding research that will drop the cost of electric-vehicle batteries 50 percent in the next three or four years and double or triple their [energy density](#) within six years so "you can go from Los Angeles to Las Vegas on a single charge," he said. "These are magical distances. To buy a car that will cost \$20,000 to \$25,000 without a subsidy, where you can go 350 miles is our goal."

Chu said he is working to change the \$7,500 federal tax credit for electric vehicle purchases to a \$7,500 rebate, so EV buyers can get an immediate discount on an EV purchase. Currently, they have to wait until they file their tax returns.

Three years ago, the U.S. made less than 1 percent of advanced batteries in the world, Chu said. Investments in battery research through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will help build 30 new U.S. battery manufacturing plants, aiding [energy](#) security as well as job creation.

"Every time we ship one of these (charging stations), three people go to work for a day: one to build it and two people to install it," said Coulomb Technologies President Richard Lowenthal. "It's a great job creation benefit to all of us.... Not just jobs, but creating an industry."

According to Villaraigosa, "What L.A. has made crystal clear is that the American Recovery Act has helped us put people back to work. It's created jobs, and invested in technology and infrastructure."

L.A.'s infrastructural improvements will continue with the upgrades of 90 existing electric charging stations owned by the city. As many as 400 others also are slated for upgrades in L.A. and surrounding cities,

Villaraigosa said.

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