

Drive Electric Vermont EV Event Planning Resources

Event Planning Overview

Events featuring plug-in electric vehicles are a proven strategy for advancing clean transportation in Vermont communities. Drive Electric Vermont has supported many in-person and virtual events over the years and has prepared the following resource for event organizers. This information borrows heavily from materials developed by Plug-in America and their partners supporting [National Drive Electric Week](#) events.

There is a wide spectrum of event possibilities ranging from a small gathering in a local EV owner's driveway, a booth at a local gathering (e.g. farmer's market), or large events drawing hundreds of people. The resources below are intended for small to medium sized events. Larger events may want to [contact Drive Electric Vermont directly](#) to discuss more detailed planning recommendations.

When possible, it can be helpful to have some time on the event agenda to have a presentation from an EV expert (often a Drive Electric Vermont and/or electric utility representative) to provide an overview of EV options, incentives and charging in Vermont. These sessions can also include time for local EV owners to share their experiences. These discussions are more easily done at event venues with indoor gathering areas (e.g. school auditorium), but for smaller groups this may be done outdoors.

Ride and Drives

Providing event attendees with the opportunity to experience an EV as a driver or passenger is greatly encouraged but organizing a "ride and drive" can involve many moving parts. We recommend developing a project plan to share with your team and track your progress. This [EV Ride and Drive Project Plan template](#) can be downloaded and edited to fit your event.

Route Planning

A good route should take about 5-15 minutes to complete and ideally will have:

- Little traffic, and no children playing nearby
- Room to legally accelerate
- A place for a complete stop/start

- Mostly right turns, to avoid waiting for traffic

Finding Electric Vehicles for an Event

Local community event organizers may already know of EV drivers who would be interested in bringing their EV to an event.

Auto dealers may also be interested in supporting local events. Dealers typically have insurance for test drives, so if you want to offer event attendees the chance to get behind the wheel at your event we recommend starting with local dealers. However, dealers are busy and may not be able to send staff to events, particularly on weekend days when showroom traffic is higher. Dealers may also have challenges providing an EV for test drives due to limited inventory.

Dealers / Utilities

- Contact local dealers selling EVs:
<https://www.driveelectricvt.com/find-your-ev/find-a-dealership>
- Electric utilities providing service in the area may be able to support your event and provide information on incentives, charging and other EV-related offerings. Some utilities may have fleet EVs they can bring for display or ride and drive activities.
- If electric bicycles are of interest, consider reaching out to local bike shops or other partners like Local Motion, VBike, and Vital Communities:
<https://www.driveelectricvt.com/ebikes>
- Electric lawn care equipment dealers (residential and/or commercial) may also be interested in participating. Resources are available at:
<https://mowelectric.org/>

Connecting With the Local EV Community

- Contact your local energy committee (if they aren't already involved):
<https://vecan.net/energy-committes/>
- Post a notice on Front Porch Forum: <https://frontporchforum.com/>
- Vermont EV Owners Facebook Group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/vermontev>

If volunteers want to offer their vehicle for test drives or rides, let them know the following information (modifying if you are only allowing rides at your event):

- It is your decision what you want to let guests do with your vehicle: look at it, sit in it, ride in it, or drive it. If you'd like to specify any rules or

limits, you might want to put a note on the car indicating so. The more you let test-drivers do, the more likely they are to be enthusiastic, but it's important to balance that with your comfort level with having others in your car.

- Check your insurance policy beforehand or check with your agent to inquire about coverage when someone else is driving your car. You can probably let others drive the car for quick trips, but check first, as a few policies will not cover even that.
- Note that you can't accept money for rides or drives, as that would count as commercial use.
- Ask for a valid driver license from anyone wishing to drive.

Event Safety

Part of having a fun, successful event is following some basic safety guidelines. Use the tips below to help make your event safer and more accessible to everyone.

1. Any event should follow any applicable local, state, and federal COVID safety regulations. Online events may be worth considering to minimize physical contact and can be recorded for later viewing by a larger audience.
2. Design a site map. The site map should identify vehicle display area, exits and entrances, lost and found area, and washrooms.
3. Make your event accessible to people with disabilities.
4. Have a first aid kit on site.
5. Specify event times, including adequate time before and after the event for all exhibitors to set up their displays before the public arrives and to take down their displays after the public has left. You want to avoid the general public being present while the event is being set up or when tents and displays are being taken down.
6. Vehicle routes should be designed to keep pedestrians and moving vehicles separated to the maximum extent possible, using cones or other barriers. Create a test drive route on surrounding streets that is 1.5 miles to 2 miles in length and ideally has all right-hand turns.

- a. Avoid any street maintenance or heavy traffic when considering the route.
 - b. Make sure vehicle routes are safe before providing test drives or rides along that route. Event organizers are responsible for obtaining permits, road closures, or anything else required by local, state, and federal agencies for the purpose of conducting test drives or rides.
7. Staff and volunteers should be clearly visible with name tags or other distinguishing characteristics.
8. Have event staff posted within the area where the test drive cars are moving to manage safety of pedestrians and vehicles. A staffer should also be posted at any point where a pedestrian walkway crosses a vehicle passage. Anyone posted at these crossings should be highly visible as drivers will be distracted by the test drive.
9. Use signage, “do not cross” tape and/or traffic cones to indicate:
 - a. Pedestrian only zones (no moving vehicles allowed)
 - b. Pedestrian crossing zones through areas with moving vehicles
 - c. Vehicle routes or places where vehicles exit and enter the event space (for ride-alongs, test drives, or attendee parking)
10. Place trash cans and recycling bins around the area to discourage people from littering.
11. Designate an area, table, or bin for lost and found items.
12. Ensure communication devices—such as cell phones or a public announcement system—are available and used by employees and/or volunteers.
13. Avoid events where alcohol is being served.
14. Allow attendees and exhibitors to provide feedback. This can help your team plan for the next event.

Note: This is not a comprehensive list of all safe event practices. We encourage you to brainstorm other safety measures as necessary for your individual event.

Insurance

Any public site should already have insurance for people on the property. Dealers have insurance for test drives. Private owners should have their own auto insurance. So, at most events, additional insurance is not required.

Event Preparation

- Email volunteers about a week before the event and again a day or two before the event. Tell volunteers where and when to meet you (or a designated person), and reiterate their expected role/duties.
- Send an email to all the registered participants. Include event start time and location, directions, local EV charging stations, an event agenda, and notable speakers or activities.
- Create signs to direct people to your event
- Determine how you'd like to have cars arranged in your area. For events with a large number of vehicles, assign a volunteer the job of directing people to parking as they arrive.

Day of the Event

As people arrive, have staff or volunteers direct them to parking and collect any desired information (e.g. name, car make, odometer, etc.). If you plan to have a parade or vehicles on display, consider putting an [Electric Miles sign](#) in each vehicle, and each driver can indicate the number of electric miles driven thus far. Collect statistics for your event report, including:

- Total number of people exposed to your event, such as attendees and people who just saw that enthusiastic EV owners were celebrating Drive Electric Week.
- Number of plug-in vehicles at the event, either on display or giving test rides/drives
- Number of test rides/drives given (if applicable)
- Name and title of any public officials who attended
- Number of conversations about EVs

Take photographs and video at your event. Try to capture smiling faces, people behind the wheel of an EV, or EVs next to iconic landmarks.

Promoting Your Event

There are many ways to spread the word about your event, and we encourage you to think about what works best in your community. See below for some ideas to help you get started.

Media Coverage

EV events are great opportunities for media coverage. Events will feature terrific visuals (EVs, engaged crowds, local leaders/public figures, award ceremonies, decorations, entertainment, etc.) that may be particularly appealing for television and newspaper cameras. See below for tips and resources:

- Send a media alert one to three weeks before the event.
- Send a press release to local media, before and after the event. Even if the media don't cover your event beforehand, they may write about it afterwards.
- Email local media outlets two weeks before the event, again one week in advance, and then two days before the event, unless the media has already responded to your first outreach.
- Reach out to local bloggers, radio stations, or other media outlets focused on sustainability issues. They may be more willing to help promote your event.
- Leverage social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) to promote your event.

EV Benefits

Whether virtual or in-person, here are things to point out that demonstrate the better driving experience of EVs:

- Great performance
- Low cost of ownership
- Quietness
- Lack of vibration
- No jerking or shifting while accelerating
- Power regeneration, rather than wasting energy in braking
- Amazing technology