

Electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming increasingly common on roads and garages across Berks County. Incentives for individuals, businesses, states, and local governments have expanded through tax incentives and funding with the passage of the federal Inflation Reduction Act. Many major auto makers have even planned to stop selling gasoline powered vehicles by 2040. How can Berks County residents and municipalities be better prepared for this shift?

The American Planning Association (APA) states that “The transforming market has implications for communities and for local governments, including land-use and development changes that need to be addressed in policy, programs, and regulation. In particular, planners and local government decision makers need to consider the land-use implications of the extensive build-out of EV charging infrastructure that is a necessary part of this new technology.” These implications and needs are explored in the October 2022 issue of Zoning Practice released by the APA.

Building codes, parking ordinances, and zoning ordinances can influence EV infrastructure by creating design standards, requiring a minimum number of EV-ready spaces for new construction, or allowing EV charger installation as part of zoning ordinances. By addressing provisions for EV chargers, municipalities and project developers can spend less time and money on projects through a quicker approval process.

Multiple resources were explored regarding these needs including, but not limited to, guidance provided by the Sustainable Energy Action Committee (SEAC), PennDOT’s EV Model Ordinance Toolkit, and best practices identified by the APA. As a result, Berks County Planning Commission staff recommends that municipalities in the County consider the following recommendations when preparing for the shift to electric vehicles (EVs).

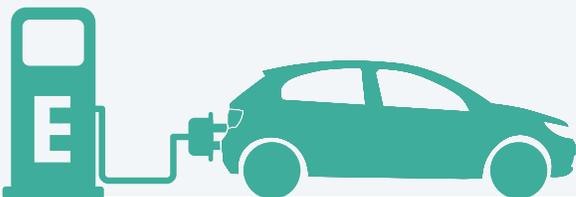
BCPC STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Related to Planning and Zoning, Each Municipality Should:

1. Address EV chargers in comprehensive plans, supporting plans, zoning codes, and design guidelines that equitably serve the community, keeping in mind residents who do not have access to dedicated off-street parking.
2. Discuss EV infrastructure in the beginning stages of the land development process with developers.
3. Coordinate with the local electric utility provider on grid capacity and consider opportunities to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure as streets are rebuilt or as utility lines are improved.
4. Enact an EV charger readiness ordinance or building code requirement that clearly specifies requirements for new development.
5. Inventory existing and proposed locations of public EV charging infrastructure.
6. Adopt zoning language that defines the terms and requirements associated with EV charging.
7. Classify EV chargers as an accessory use to a site, allowable in all zones, where EV chargers are a primary use, allow them as an approved use that is not subject to a conditional use permit and zoning review.
8. Identify which levels and locations of EV charging may be approved administratively, and clearly identify those exceptions that require more involved approval.

Related to Parking Requirements, Each Municipality Should:

1. Allow spots with EV charging and charger-ready parking spaces to count toward minimum parking standards.
2. Allow for EV charging-related equipment in parking space minimums if it cannot be accommodated outside the parking area.
3. Update parking ordinances to restrict parking in EV charging spaces to charging EVs and enforce the ordinances with clear signage including citation information.
4. Count wheelchair accessible EV charging spaces as two standard parking spaces to allow for a wider spot and landing zone.
5. Require accessible EV chargers be placed on an accessible route to the entrance of the facility.
6. Require clear signage and proper lighting to increase the convenience and safety of those who are charging EVs.



For more information visit: bit.ly/BCPC_EV