

Los Angeles, USA

LA provides access to affordable electric vehicle car sharing with BlueLA

The City of Los Angeles is moving rapidly towards electrified transportation. To include people and communities often left out of these transformations, Los Angeles entered a unique public-private-partnership to launch an electric car sharing program in low-income neighborhoods of the city. In its pilot phase, the partnering firm BlueLA car sharing is improving mobility and creating jobs for people in the targeted communities.

BlueLA team outreach to the community.



What are the key lessons learned?

With the imminent move to electrified transportation in Los Angeles, through the Sustainable City pLAn [11](#), and the need to support low-income communities and provide access to electric vehicles, the City of Los Angeles and the Bolloré Group launched the BlueLA program on a commercial scale in April 2018 as an EV car sharing program targeted at its low-income communities. The project includes electric vehicles (EV), charging stations, dedicated parking spaces, and an expansive community outreach and marketing component to inform the communities and boost program participation. The project, in a pilot phase, is initially focused in areas of Los Angeles including Westlake, Koreatown, Pico-Union, Downtown, Echo Park, Boyle Heights, and Chinatown. As of December 2018, the first 20 of 40 charging “hubs” (five stations each) have been installed.

By targeting these low-income areas, the BlueLA program delivers an immediate impact on the air quality in these same neighborhoods, improving the health and wellness of the community.

The premise for the project is curbside EV charging stations and dedicated parking spaces for BlueLA cars where members are able to reserve cars or parking spaces at a minute-based rate (\$0.15/min) and capped at \$9 for 3 hours of use for income-qualified members. Individuals can become members online or in-person at site kiosks. Memberships are priced with low-income populations in mind but anyone can become a member. If you are in an existing assistance program or can prove low-income status, you are entitled to subsidized membership and a 25% discount on usage rates. The service is intended as both a one-way and round trip car share, meaning that users may return the vehicle either in another BlueLA “hub” or return to the car’s “home” location, providing flexibility for the user to combine driving with other modes of transportation.

A unique aspect of the program is its involvement of Street Ambassadors who are hired from the targeted low-income communities as outreach agents. These Street Ambassadors and the other outreach initiatives at BlueLA constitute a range of face-to-face approaches that create awareness and excitement in local communities for electric vehicle car sharing.

As the project is still in its pilot phase, the feedback on the project’s success is mostly anecdotal. Through community events, BlueLA has heard of ways the vehicles are being used: doctor’s visits, job interviews, school drop-offs, weekend beach trips, driving practice with their children, to pick up supplies for their businesses, or to deliver food orders.




Climate

The BlueLA Car Share pilot program is expected to reach 7,000 members, who in turn are expected to avoid purchasing 1,000 private vehicles, reducing annual greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 2,150 metric tons of CO2. The expanded program will have an even larger impact, including the program’s installation of 200 EV charging stations to encourage households that do own cars to shift to electric vehicles as well.




Inclusivity

The BlueLA project goes beyond addressing climate but also provides equitable access to car sharing programs and electric transportation in LA. Programs like BlueLA give low-income communities access to transportation that augments public transit. These communities are often disproportionately impacted by pollution and emissions from city traffic. By encouraging low-emission vehicles throughout the City, the BlueLA program will have an enormous impact on the air quality and health in these areas.

Case Study Type:  Project

Primary Sector:  Transportation

ICA Pillar:  Impact

Primary Impact:  Wealth and Economy

How might these lessons be used in your City?

Build a diverse and inclusive steering group to ensure successful implementation

Led by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), the project was initiated through a public Request for Proposals (RFP) process to select a provider. The Bolloré Group was selected by the City and soon after, they created a subsidiary called BlueCalifornia responsible for implementing the BlueLA project. The City of LA oversees this project with technical support from Mobility Development Partners, and with regular project input in two forms; from a Steering Committee of community based organizations, and the Tiger Team of city departments and external partners guiding project construction. The steering committee is currently composed of three community-based organizations: Salvadorian American Leadership Education Fund (SALEF), Tenemos que Reclamar y Unidos Salvar la Tierra – South LA (T.R.U.S.T. South LA), and Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA). This committee helps to design the pilot, plan the outreach program including the nearly 200 community forums and events held so far. The Tiger Team, on the other hand, consists of representatives from all city agencies with a stake in the roadside curb and meets weekly to discuss project implementation.

BlueLA Steering Committee

The BlueLA project integrates a diverse steering committee through three prominent LA community organizations. These community-based organizations have a presence on the ground with local communities who often face difficulties accessing resources and opportunities due to language barriers or financial limitations. One example of these organizations is KIWA, or the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance. This group organizes immigrant workers, tenants, and families around workplace justice, housing rights, immigrant rights, democratic and sustainable community development, civic participation, gender justice, cultural resistance, and more^[2]. This group is centered around Koreatown in the City of Los Angeles, home to predominantly Korean and Latino residents. This organization, like the others, ensures that the people they represent have a seat at the table and are being given equal rights and access. In the case of BlueLA, it is critical to have the support of these community-based organizations to bring the community to the program through a trusted ally and ensure that the ultimate impacts of the project are benefitting all diverse groups. The steering committee helps the BlueLA team in designing the program specifically around outreach and impact.



Tiger Team

In order to ensure smooth implementation of the new car share program, BlueLA and the City of LA put together the Tiger Team representative of all City agencies with a stake in the roadside curb. Included in the Team are representatives for LA Department of Water & Power, the Bureau of Engineering, the Bureau of Contract Administration, the Bureau of Street Services, and the LA Department of Transportation. Each of these Tiger Team members carries with them expertise and different perspectives on implementing projects in the City. As advisors to the BlueLA project, the Tiger Team is able to anticipate hurdles and challenges the project may face and recommend strategies for successful implementation. To share their wisdom, the Tiger Team meets weekly with BlueLA to make more technical project decisions regarding the implementation of the project such as infrastructure concerns or sites for new stations.

Hire from local communities to create multiple benefits for residents and increase outreach

Community inclusion and outreach is a major component of the program and is considered essential to its success. Under its current contract, BlueLA is required to hire employees with a preference for local candidates. One manner in which this is satisfied is through Street Ambassadors who are hired from within targeted communities. These agents are responsible for recruiting members, educating the community on how the program works, reaching out to businesses and colleges for partnership, and conducting 'Drive and Ride' events to spur program excitement. The integration of local workforce into the project's implementation generates jobs and community support and contributes to BlueLA with community-based expertise.

Since the program's official launch in April 2018, 20 hubs and 100 stations equipped with five charging units per station were deployed in the areas of Downtown, East Hollywood, and North of the University of Southern California. The program currently has over 1,000 members and 70 vehicles in operation that have provided over 5,000 rides. So far, the project is close to meeting its goals for the pilot project of delivering 200 charging stations and 100 electric vehicles by February 2019, with the vision of reaching 7,000 members in the targeted neighborhoods by 2020. The team ultimately defines success as the percentage of members signed up to the program from the targeted low-income communities.

Create access and pricing structures that allow low-income communities to participate

In selecting locations for BlueLA stations, the team has three criteria: (1) the stations must be close to a metro or bus stop to help solve the first mile, last mile dilemma, (2) the stations must be safe for both pedestrian and car access, and (3) the stations must be clearly visible to members for easy way finding.

The program is set up as a one-way car sharing system that targets short usages (under three hours) where a fully charged vehicle has the capacity for approximately 125 electric miles. As a program specifically targeting low-income communities, the program pricing is structured accordingly.

Access to electric vehicles for all



Improved air quality
in neighborhoods



Enhanced
mobility



Created local jobs
and affordability

Create access for...



Diversity

Provide resources and
engagement in
multiple languages



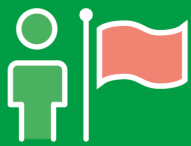
Low-income residents

Subscription pricing
and local hiring



Disinvested neighborhoods

Stations located in
low-income
neighborhoods



Street Ambassadors:

Community members hired
to promote the program



Low cost:

EV car sharing eliminates gas, insurance,
parking and car ownership costs



No emissions:

Transportation options
for cleaner air for LA

The subscription fee to become a member, for those who are able to show proof of financial hardship, is \$1 per month and operating costs are \$0.15 per minute (or \$9 per hour). Regular members are charged a fee of \$5 per month and \$0.20 per minute (or \$12 per hour). In addition, the program caps this usage rate at \$9 for up to 3 hours, allowing members to use the vehicles at a very affordable rate. Aware of the fact that many of the targeted residents are without any bank account, BlueLA created a path to membership for these individuals. As the program currently only accepts debit and credit cards, the operator has collaborated with community organizations to help these individuals build credit and obtain a debit card and eventually a credit card. Relatedly, BlueLA accepts all driver's licenses, even those issued outside of the United States, as long as they supply an International Driving Permit.

Leverage grants from other levels of government

The state of California mandates that at least 35% of funds from its cap-and-trade program are invested in disadvantaged and low-income communities by the California Air Resources Board (CARB)^[3]. The City of LA took advantage of this opportunity to fund transportation improvements prioritizing disadvantaged communities and neighborhoods in the City. In 2015, the City won \$1.7 Million of this funding through the California Climate Investment (CCI) program. In their bid during the procurement process, BlueLA offered an initial investment of \$10 Million to start the project, putting off their profits until after year five of the program. Additionally, for each charging station installed, BlueLA is able to receive a \$5,000 rebate for each charger from the EV rebate program funded by the LA Department of Water & Power^[4].

Project milestones

April 2015: The Sustainable City pLAn released

2015: City of LA awarded California Climate Investment grant

2015: RFP to identify program operator released and awarded

Dec 2016: BlueLA project contract approved by LA City Council

April 2018: Pilot project initiated

February 2019: Pilot project scheduled to end

2019: Pending the next round of grant awards, the program will expand starting with additional community outreach and engagement

Measure impact through an iterative process

As a continual part of the program, BlueLA conducts member surveys when individuals enter the program and when they leave the program. This allows BlueLA to better understand if the program is meeting expectations and the needs of its members such as affordable means to increased mobility or improved access to employment and appointments.

Once the program reaches a critical mass (around 25 stations), BlueLA plans for a more extensive survey, targeting members and non-members alike, and to conduct an in-depth analysis of all data collected from the pilot. Through this effort, the team will analyze anecdotes and key performance indicators such as the number and length of rides, the number and zip code of members, the number of accidents and general behavior of drivers (tracked through and aided by an operator 24/7 in the case of an incident or emergency). BlueLA hopes to determine if the pilot was a success by signing up and maintaining members from targeted low-income communities in addition to keeping users safe and happy.

Expand programs with proven results

Looking to wrap up the pilot program, the City has applied for another grant from CARB in the order of \$3 Million. The City and BlueLA have also pledged additional resources of their own towards this second phase. Phase 2 will expand the pilot program to 300 EVs and 500 charging stations starting in February 2019 and also begin the installation for electric scooter / bike share networks. This final pilot program expansion will spread the program into Boyle Heights, Thai Town, South L.A., and East Hollywood, among other neighborhoods. This project is exemplary of one built to serve the people who are most impacted by climate change and offers them services that not only help to mitigate the effect of poor air quality and pollution but to improve their daily lives.

References

1

<http://plan.lamayor.org/>

2

<http://kiwa.org>

3

<http://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov>

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https://ladwp.com/ladwp/faces/wcnav_externalId/c-sm-rp-ev?_adf.ctrl-state=14hlsqgayf_4&_afLoop=720104648757896&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=1csgquiou3_1#%40%3F__afWindowId%3D1csgquiou3_1%26_afLoop%3D720104648757896%26__afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D1csgquiou3_17