

ACCELERATE KOOTENAYS

POWERING TOURISM WITH ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

In 2022, light duty zero-emission vehicle sales represented 18.1 percent of all light-duty vehicle sales in BC—the highest percentage in Canada. However, in a recent Canadian Automobile Association survey, 44 percent of zero-emission vehicle drivers expressed concern that there aren't enough public charging sites.

In the Kootenay Rockies, a multi-sector collaboration—including Kootenay Rockies Tourism and the Community Energy Association—committed to increasing the number of charging stations in the area. The project, called Accelerate Kootenays, endeavoured to boost visitation from travellers who drive zero-emission vehicles and extend stays from visitors waiting for their vehicles to charge. The result: sustainable transportation, reduced emissions, and economic growth.



ROSSLAND | Photo: Kari Medig



PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

The project came with several key considerations, including the need for education around the benefit of electric vehicle charging stations and how to operate them.

Businesses that could accommodate the charging sites were limited in time and resources as many are staffed by one or two people who don't often have the capacity to move a project forward.

Certified tradespeople in the region were scarce, which made it challenging to hire locally. And, when a local contractor could be hired, there was often delays in getting started due to their busy schedules.



ROGERS PASS | Photo: Kari Medig

PROJECT APPROACH

Accelerate Kootenays received funding from various sources, including the Province of B.C.'s [Targeted Regional Tourism Development Initiative](#). Funding supported the installation of charging stations at Indigenous, non-profit, and municipally owned tourism locations in Nakusp, New Denver, Kimberley, Golden, and Kaslo. In addition to supporting sustainable travel, introducing these stations to key tourism sites is a strategic way to encourage visitors with zero-emission vehicles to spend time at local attractions while their vehicle charges.

To support industry advocacy and adoption, Kootenay Rockies Tourism and the Community Energy Association widely promoted the benefits of electric vehicle chargers through websites, social media, and printed handouts. The team met with potential partners to explain the value of the chargers, and address questions and concerns. They also helped local professionals learn how to install the charging stations, recognizing the economic and social value of equipping locals with this specific expertise.

PROJECT RESULTS

Accelerate Kootenays brought more than 50 chargers to 40 communities. The second phase of the project, Accelerate Kootenays 2.0, is in the process of installing another 100 chargers.

Kootenay Rockies Tourism and the Community Energy Association's collaboration to electrify tourism sites has resulted in an impressive array of charging options along highways and at tourism sites such as ski resorts, hiking trails, and beaches.

This early and ongoing effort to expand charging options for visitors and residents has accelerated zero-emission vehicle adoption in the region. In fact, the year after Accelerate Kootenays was implemented, zero-emission vehicle adoption nearly tripled.

Seeing charging stations along highways and throughout rural areas increases confidence in electric vehicle charging technology and supports safe and convenient travel. It also boosts the appeal of zero-emission vehicle ownership to urban residents. As B.C. continues to promote sustainable tourism, electric vehicle chargers at key tourism venues will encourage visitors to travel more sustainably, and spend more time exploring tourism sites and attractions as their vehicles charge.



SLOCAN | Photo: Mitch Winton

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Like so many destination development and management initiatives, Accelerate Kootenays demonstrates the importance of engagement with partners and the local community. It also shows the need to address limitations in partner knowledge and resources by providing clear and ongoing education.

Finally, while it's easy to look for big wins, moving forward in small increments is still progress. Large projects can require a shift in behaviour or actions—and while that can take time, the long-term benefits are worth it.



FERNIE | Photo: Mitch Winton

