



Renewable Communities 2020

Massachusetts cities and towns
leading the way to 100% renewable energy

Belmont: Belmont Drives Electric

Belmont Drives Electric is a collaboration between the municipal utility, Belmont Light; Sustainable Belmont, a citizen group; and the Belmont Energy Committee, a town board, to encourage Belmont residents to switch to electric vehicles (EVs).¹

Belmont Drives Electric educates potential buyers about financial incentives for EV purchases. Massachusetts' MOR-EV program offers a \$2,500 rebate on battery electric vehicles and a \$1,500 rebate on plug-in hybrid vehicles.² The federal government offers a tax credit of \$2,500–\$7,500, depending on the vehicle size and battery capacity, for EVs purchased from certain manufacturers.³

In addition to state and federal support, Belmont residents are also eligible for local incentives from Belmont Light. The utility offers \$250 rebates for wifi-enabled charging equipment, and also helps connect residents with certified electricians to install the equipment. Additionally, EV owners can qualify for an \$8 per month electric bill credit if they agree to charge their vehicles during off-peak hours.⁴

Belmont Drives Electric promotes EV incentives through blog posts, stories in local media outlets, and free test drives. Marty Bitner, co-chair of the Belmont Energy Committee, said that getting residents behind the wheel is enough to persuade them that an EV is like a “normal car, only it’s faster, quieter, and more fun to drive.”⁵ Bitner owns two EVs and says he will “never go back” to gas-powered cars.⁶

Belmont is one of the top communities in Massachusetts for EV adoption. As of June 2020, 250 residents of

Belmont had applied for or received rebates through the MOR-EV program, more than almost any other zip code.⁷

According to the town’s greenhouse gas inventory, in 2014 transportation was responsible for approximately 36% of Belmont’s emissions.⁸ In 2018, the Belmont Energy Committee developed a plan to reduce the town’s greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. The plan, adopted by town meeting in a 196-14 vote, calls for 50% of all new vehicles purchased town-wide to be EVs by 2030, in addition to a 100% emissions-free electricity supply by 2022 and increased adoption of air-source heat pumps as an alternative to oil and gas heating.⁹

1. “About Belmont Drives Electric,” Belmont Drives Electric, <<http://www.belmontdriveselectric.org/>>.
2. “Eligible Vehicles List,” MOR-EV, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition, <<https://mor-ev.org/eligible-vehicles/>>.
3. “What Is an Electric Vehicle Tax Credit?,” Car and Driver, <<https://www.caranddriver.com/research/a31267893/electric-vehicle-tax-credit/>>.
4. “Belmont Light Smart Charging and Bring Your Own Charger Programs,” Belmont Drives Electric, <<http://www.belmontdriveselectric.org/chargers-and-incentives.html>>.
5. “Belmont Drives Electric,” belmontmedia, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THMBN3tr5IM>>.
6. “Electric Vehicles: One Owner’s Perspective,” Marty Bitner, Belmont Citizens Forum, 15 July 2019, <<https://www.belmontcitizensforum.org/2019/07/15/electric-vehicles-one-owners-perspective/>>.
7. “MOR-EV Program Statistics,” MOR-EV, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition, <<https://mor-ev.org/program-statistics/>>.
8. “Town of Belmont CO₂ Emission Inventory Update,” James Booth, Energy Committee, Town of Belmont, <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf2801/f/file/file/belmont_ghg_inventory_update_march_2016.pdf>.
9. “From Here to There: Belmont’s Roadmap to Decarbonization,” Roger Colton, Belmont Citizens Forum, 16 July 2019, <<https://www.belmontcitizensforum.org/2019/07/16/from-here-to-there-belmonts-roadmap-to-decarbonization/>>.