



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 11, 2023

TO: Board of Supervisors

THROUGH: Rachel Flynn, AIA  
Deputy County Executive

FROM: John Morrill, Acting Director  
Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC)

SUBJECT: Charge Up Fairfax Pilot Program Update

### Summary

- The Charge Up Fairfax program is accepting new applications through November 12, 2023, for a second phase of the pilot program. County staff and consultants will work with a new cohort of five common-interest (e.g. HOA) communities. This second phase of the pilot will build upon initial participant feedback and lessons learned to bring more informed assistance to additional communities.
- The County's website includes a [page](#) with a wealth of information on electric vehicle charging in general and the Charge Up program in particular. The program is promoted through newsletters, social media, webinars, and presentations to civic groups.
- County staff and consultants have already been working with five homeowner associations in the first phase of the pilot, and these experiences are informing our program as it evolves.
- In Spring 2024, with lessons learned from this extended pilot effort, OEEC plans to launch the Charge Up Fairfax program at full scale with the goal of working with 15 communities each year.
- Staff believe this program is unique among local governments, and this effort has attracted the interest of several neighboring jurisdictions facing similar challenges in their communities.

### Background

On September 30, 2022, OEEC staff outlined a [proposed pilot program](#) called Charge Up Fairfax to the Board of Supervisors' Transportation Committee. Charge Up Fairfax is designed to help common-interest communities, like homeowner and condominium associations (collectively "HOAs"), provide electric vehicle (EV) charging for residents. For many people, at-home charging is the most convenient and affordable way to charge their EV, but residents of many

HOA communities face challenges with at-home charging, particularly those residents who do not have a private garage or driveway where they can access electricity. In addition, many HOA communities have very few unassigned parking spaces that are suitable for community charging. HOA boards of directors have sought County help with the installation of community EV charging stations due to the logistics of changing the use of common-area parking and uncertainties about the costs and technical requirements of EV charging equipment.

## **Program Structure**

Charge Up Fairfax is designed to help HOAs with the exploration and installation of “[Level 2](#)” charging stations, which are considered an intermediate level of charging suitable for retail, multi-family, and other public charging locations. The Charge Up Fairfax webpage provides information and resources to help communities assess their needs and assist their project planning. Any EV charging stations installed with financial assistance from the Charge Up Fairfax program must be accessible to all residents and their guests.

The responsibility rests with the HOA to examine the needs of their community. The Charge Up Fairfax webpage outlines the steps HOAs can take to begin exploration of EV charger installation. This includes reference materials and resources such as a sample resident survey to assess community support and demand for charging stations. Charge Up Fairfax strongly recommends that HOAs 1) select parking spaces that would be used for community charging, 2) examine their bylaws, and 3) discuss their installation plan with their insurance company and any legal counsel to ensure the plan is in conformity with required legal and financial documents.

HOAs that are selected for Charge Up Fairfax receive an engineering site visit and a feasibility memo provided by a consultant contracted by the County. The County pays \$5,000-\$10,000 for each completed feasibility memo. The feasibility memo is customized for each HOA to address any physical and environmental barriers, power needs, site conditions, estimated costs, and the anticipated timeline for project installation. The goal of the feasibility memo is to help HOAs understand their unique project needs and to aid them in making informed decisions as they move forward with their project.

Project implementation is the responsibility of the HOA. The County provides guidance and reference materials based on best practices elsewhere. These recommendations suggest HOAs:

- request quotes from multiple contractors,
- discuss the proposals with their association membership before proceeding with work, and
- work with their hired contractor to:
  - coordinate electrical upgrades,
  - choose charging equipment,
  - establish an operating and maintenance plan with the equipment manufacturer, and
  - arrange for the permitting, installation, and inspection of the equipment.

HOAs participating in the program are eligible for reimbursement of some of their costs once the charging equipment is installed and operating successfully. These grants cover up to one-third of eligible expenses, not to exceed \$5,000 per HOA. However, HOAs located in areas classified as having high or very high vulnerability in the Fairfax County Vulnerability Index, or as

disadvantaged in the Federal Government's Justice40 Initiative, are eligible for a reimbursement grant of up to \$10,000.

### **Pilot Program**

In March 2023, OEEC invited HOAs that had previously expressed interest in community EV charging to apply for the pilot program. Of the twenty-six communities invited to apply, nine sent applications, one subsequently withdrew, and staff selected five HOAs to work with, based on HOA community support and readiness. The County selection committee also considered whether the HOAs are in an area identified as having high or very high vulnerability in the Fairfax County Vulnerability Index, or as disadvantaged in the Justice40 Initiative. Of the five initial pilot program participants, one is in an area identified in the Fairfax County Vulnerability Index (Inlet Cluster HOA in Reston). The distribution of the initial pilot participants is as follows: three are in the Hunter Mill District, one is in the Springfield District, and one is in the Braddock District. Of the three that weren't selected for the first pilot phase, two are in the Hunter Mill District and one is in the Braddock District.

The pilot program has already provided valuable information about the challenging decisions HOA communities face when providing EV charging to residents. These decisions include:

- Two of the five pilot program communities plan to create additional parking spaces to be used for charging spaces. In one of these cases OEEC staff met with staff of Land Development Services (LDS), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), and the Office of the Fire Marshall to inform the community how to best move forward with the creation of the new charging spaces.
- One of the pilot HOAs is reexamining whether to move forward with community charging stations, as opposed to having residents install charging stations in their assigned parking spaces for individual use. Another pilot participant is reexamining the number of charging stations they would like to install. A third pilot program HOA experienced more pressing repair needs in the community, so their project has been delayed due to funding availability.
- While all the initial pilot HOAs remain engaged with OEEC, as of September none of the communities have selected a contractor. Four of the five HOAs have received quotes from a variety of contractors and the boards of directors are discussing the proposals with their associations.

OEEC solicited and collected feedback from pilot participants thus far. The participants indicated that the program materials received from the County met or exceeded expectations and are helpful for their project. Survey respondents indicated that the feasibility memo was helpful with their next steps and HOA decision-making and that it aids in sharing project information with the board of directors and homeowners.

OEEC works with Vybe Energy as the technical consultant for the pilot program. Vybe representatives conduct the engineering site assessment and provide the feasibility memo that is

provided to HOAs. The County has an MOU with Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) to serve as the grant administrator.

OEEC is coordinating with LDS and the Zoning Administration Division (ZAD) to ensure a whole-county approach with selected HOAs. Both LDS and ZAD identified a single point of contact for program coordination, and both departments provided language on the Charge Up Fairfax webpage so HOAs have one place where all relevant information from the County can be found. Additionally, LDS coordinated with OEEC on the development of a new webpage titled [Guide for HOAs Installing Electric Vehicle Charging Stations](#), and a representative from LDS sits on the Charge Up Fairfax selection committee and participates in site visits to provide expertise related to the County's permitting process.

### **Next Steps**

On September 5, 2023, the Charge Up Fairfax pilot program webpage was launched and [applications are once again being accepted](#) through November 12, 2023 for five additional pilot communities. In addition to equity considerations, community support, and readiness, the selection committee will consider diversity of locations throughout the county as well as diversity in the nature of the project (i.e., is the EV charging to be located in a parking structure or in surface parking?).

There is strong community interest in the program: sixty-three participants joined a Charge Up Fairfax webinar on September 14, 2023, and dozens of individuals have signed up to receive program updates. OEEC promotes the program through news releases, social media, the OEEC monthly electronic newsletter, and, staff are engaging with the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations and other community groups.

While working with the selected pilot participants, OEEC is also preparing to launch the program at scale in spring 2024. At full scale, OEEC anticipates working with approximately fifteen communities annually. The budget allocation of \$625,000 made in FY 2024 will fund the program for approximately two years. The program spending includes payment to the firm conducting the site visits and preparing the feasibility memos, as well as the reimbursement grant funds made to selected HOAs once the EV charging equipment is operational, and compensation to NVSWCD for the administration of grant funds.

County staff will continue to engage pilot participants for creation of case studies to benefit all Fairfax County HOA communities. Throughout the life of the program, staff will adjust guidance provided to HOAs to reflect emerging best practices and industry trends. Thus far, staff have learned that while each community is unique, there are emerging best practices that will be shared through the Charge Up website to help many more HOAs install EV charging without direct technical or financial assistance from the program.

Staff would be happy to have further discussions with the Transportation Committee as additional insights are gained and the program shows results, including staff and resource requirements. If you have comments or questions on this memo, please contact John Morrill,

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