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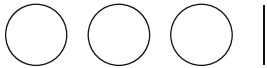
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OPINION

Commentary: Chris Woodward - If they build it, will they drive it?

Chris Woodward

Updated: June 18, 2021 12:14 a.m.



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American taxpayers subsidize electric vehicles. American politicians hold press conferences promoting electric cars, too. But the one thing almost nobody in the U.S. is prepared to do?

Actually drive them.

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1.5 million are plug-in electric vehicles and another 5.4 million are hybrid electric. That's less than 2% of the registered vehicles on the road, and nearly half of all electric vehicles in the country are in California alone.

Advocates for electric vehicles have embraced President Joe Biden's proposal in his American Jobs Plan to spend \$15 billion building a national network of 500,000 charging stations. Half a million stations would be a big leap from the number of stations presently available in the United States. In March, the Department of Energy's Alternative Fuel Data Center celebrated the "milestone" of 100,000 public chargers.

But critics are asking if the \$15 billion on charging stations is setting up billions more in taxpayer spending on electric vehicles in the future. Once there's such a large sunk cost on the EV infrastructure, it will be harder to say no to subsidies on the sale of electric cars.

"If you build it, they will come' does not work for EV charging stations," says Ben Lieberman of the Competitive Enterprise Institute in Washington. "Billions of tax dollars have already been spent, yet all but a few percent of new car buyers prefer gasoline-powered vehicles, (so) throwing even more money at both the charging infrastructure is not likely to make a difference."

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Gordon Tomb, senior fellow of the Commonwealth Foundation agreed.

“A government program funding charging stations is another green energy boondoggle that likely would create mostly unused facilities ignored by people who would continue to drive what they prefer: gasoline- and diesel-powered cars and trucks that are cheaper and more efficient than electric vehicles,” says Tomb. “Electric vehicles are one more green fetish with little basis in reality.”

EV advocates may disagree with that assessment, but the data show taxpayer subsidies have yet to generate significant demand for the vehicles. And in an era

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“This is corporate welfare,” Williams added, noting that the federal government has been offering \$7,500 per vehicle subsidies since 2010. Biden’s plan is to hit the accelerator and pour \$174 billion into EVs — twice as much as his proposed infrastructure spending on railroads and public transportation.

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The Biden administration says this investment is necessary to fight climate change. But Tomb points to a 2019 Manhattan Institute report which found that even if the number of the world's electric vehicles were to increase 100-fold, global oil demand would decrease by a mere 6%.

“And converting the world to all-electric vehicles would require 8 trillion lithium batteries — a quantity that would make up a football stadium-size stack extending 50 miles up to the edge of outer space, according to Dr. Scott Tinker, director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin,” said Tomb.

Joe Biden's Billion-Dollar 'If You Build It, They Will Drive' EV Charger Strategy

By Chris Woodward

InsideSources.com



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Chris Woodward

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