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Energy Office Pushes for Electric Vehicle Adoption Amid Rising Fuel Costs

As fuel prices continue to burden residents, the V.I. Energy Office is working to make electric vehicle adoption more accessible. The government has installed charging stations and provided over \$150,000 in federal incentives to encourage the transition.

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V.I. Energy Office Director Kyle Fleming, upper left, stands near one of the 23 Tesla EVs purchased through his office. By. V.I. ENERGY OFFICE

With the territory's fuel costs expected to remain a steadily increasing burden to the average Virgin Islander, the Virgin Islands Energy Office said it is working diligently to encourage conversion to electric vehicles. VIEO Director Kyle Fleming participated in the second part of a

Committee of the Whole session aimed at identifying solutions for the territory's high cost of living.

“One of my goals as Director of the Energy Office is to make the switch to electric vehicles a no-brainer decision for residents,” Mr. Fleming declared. Despite the current high cost of electricity and the lack of a stable supply, he believes that the territory's steady progress toward renewable energy adoption will prove beneficial in the long run. “For this core reason, the Virgin Islands Energy Office has been steadfast in promoting the benefits of ditching the pump and reaching for the plug,” testified Mr. Fleming.

The Government of the Virgin Islands continues to [replace some of its fleet](#) with electric vehicles, and charging stations have already been installed at several government offices and elsewhere. With the government setting the tone, the Energy Office is now attempting to convince the public to convert as well. “We have tailored policies and programs that are designed to help Virgin Islanders,” he announced. In 2024, the Energy Office “gave out over \$150,000 of federal funding to approximately 30 recent EV adopters in the territory, softening the hearts and minds long accustomed to traditional gas vehicles.”

Despite its progress, the Energy Office is well aware that “electrical service reputation has been the foremost challenge the Energy Office has faced in its efforts to offer consumers access to alternatives.” Local access to electrical vehicles is also a hindrance, but it's one that Mr. Fleming says the Office is actively working to remedy. The GVI has signed a letter of intent with the territory's auto dealers “with the goal of beginning to open the door for local dealerships to leverage federal funding towards the expansion of electric vehicle service capabilities in the territory.”

Conscious of the prohibitive cost of fuel in the territory, particularly on St. Thomas and St. John, lawmakers supported the Energy Office's efforts. Still, Senator Alma Francis Heyliger questioned whether electric vehicles are suitable for St. Thomas and St. John's hilly terrain. She learned from Mr. Fleming that “electric vehicles perform, and oftentimes excel, compared to their gas counterparts, even in the most hilly terrain.” He told the lawmaker that “there's actually more electric vehicles in St. Thomas and St. John collectively than St. Croix.”

He also eased Senator Hubert Frederick's concerns about “reliability,” explaining that an electrical vehicle purchased by the Office six years ago has only required “changing of tires, which is an inevitable reality for any vehicle in the Virgin Islands.”

“The inflationary pressures that have seen gas prices soar in the territory for the last few years show no sign of easing,” contended Mr. Fleming. “There are only so many non-essential purchases working families can continue to defer as they struggle to keep their vehicles on the road,” he said, hoping to motivate drivers to make the change towards charging, rather than filling up at the pump.