

Opinion

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SBA resource partners help many thrive

Your Turn
 Steve Rager
 Guest columnist

The U.S. Small Business Administration is focused on elevating America's 30 million small businesses, the engines of our national and regional economies. Collaboration with our resource partners is essential to our mission of helping them start, grow and expand.

The SBA provides access to capital, training and additional resources to help small businesses start and grow their operations and accelerate growth. SBA resource partners — SCORE, Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers and Veterans Business Outreach Centers — complement our agency's work by providing quality one-on-one counseling and mentorship that can help unleash a small business's potential. They provide small-business owners with priceless commodities: education and confidence to move forward. Whether they need help creating a successful business plan, getting expert advice on expanding, or training their employees, the SBA's national network of resource partners can help — usually for free or at an extremely low cost.

If you're an entrepreneur just starting out, SBA resources can help you organize your thoughts on what type of business you want to open and how to set it up. They also can help you obtain financing and develop your business management skills — or just the opportunity to talk about them with an expert.

SCORE, the nation's largest network of volunteer business mentors, harnesses the passion and knowledge of real-world executives to provide invaluable guidance in person or via email or video chat. Visit sbs.gov/score to start working on your business goals or schedule an appointment with a SCORE counselor.

Small Business Development Centers provide free counseling and low-cost training on topics such as

Businesses should offer electric car charging



Your Turn
 Ted Crane
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Ask yourself, "What is my average daily travel?" Work, shopping and back home.

If the battery in an EV (electric vehicle) has the moxie (a.k.a. kilowatt-hours) to take you that far, you don't need a gasoline engine. An EV car with a smallish battery — like the Prius Prime — may have enough kWh to complete simple daily travel: Danby to downtown and around, and back.

Do you need to go farther than that? Two choices: a bigger battery or a hybrid EV with gasoline backup.

What about long trips? Last weekend, I drove about 650 miles. The overnight charge in my Prius ran out after 25 miles, but the gasoline engine — augmented by energy captured and recycled by the battery — averaged almost 70 mpg for the rest of the trip.

There are currently few EV options that will take you 650 miles, or even close to that, on one charge. You have to plan your trip around recharges: know where the chargers are and build charging time into your travel (and time to wait for an available charger). Some drivers enjoy this twist to long-distance travel, but it's not everybody's cup of tea. This will change in a few years, as the infrastructure providing the "gas station model" of charging improves.

How about charging for short trips? EVs with smaller batteries can easily charge up overnight from

a household outlet (a "Level 1" charger). Bigger batteries could require "Level 2" chargers with wiring and outlets similar to an electric oven, electric dryer or electric water heater.

Home charging is not without cost, but compared to gasoline, home electricity is cheap. The \$3 you pay per gallon at the pump would buy you about 20kWh. That gallon gets you maybe 40 miles, while the 20kWh could get you 80 miles. If you have Solar PV panels and you're selling excess power to NYSEG, the \$3 gets you maybe 120kWh, or 480 miles. Your fuel cost savings can help finance those Solar PV panels.

It is easy to make an argument that destination businesses — and government offices — should provide free charging for customers and clients as a "de minimis" cost of doing business. Take, for example, Walmart. The operating cost for two dozen chargers, continuously used in its parking lot, would be comparable to the living wage for one greeter at its front door.

The same holds true for supermarkets, movie theaters, restaurants or parking lots. Did you know that several of the parking garages in downtown Ithaca already offer free charging (while you pay for parking, of course)?

Widespread adoption of a free-charging policy would be a terrific boon to the adoption of EV technology. New York state is doing its part of the effort by offering substantial funding for charger installation to businesses and governments. How long will it be before businesses take advantage of this and begin using free charging as a sales incentive?

Ted Crane is a Danby resident.



An electric car charging station.
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