

# Column: EV charging infrastructure can spark employment boom

March 23, 2024 The Virginian-Pilot



Something extraordinary happened last year. More than \$600 million was provided to communities across the United States to build more public chargers for electric vehicles and make charger networks available everywhere.

These funds are courtesy of the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant

Program (CFI), a competitive grant program created by President Joe Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. CFI's goal is to deploy EV charging infrastructure in the places where Americans live and work, in both urban and rural areas.

The grant program includes two tracts for funding, one for "corridors" (designated major roadways called alternative fuel corridors) and the second for "communities" (public roads, schools, parks and public parking lots), prioritizing rural areas and low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. In total, these tracts make available \$2.5 billion over five years.

Why does this matter? Because the availability of public EV charging is a key barrier to greater EV adoption. While a recent survey from Consumer Reports found 7 in 10 Americans expressed some level of interest in buying or leasing an EV, "charging logistics" (where to charge) were the main barriers to purchasing an EV (even more than "range anxiety"). In the commonwealth, more than half of Virginians are likely to consider an electric vehicle for their next car, while 30% cite "availability of charging" and "range" as the greatest barrier.

In other words, the interest in EVs is strong, but we simply must address the availability of public charging infrastructure to make EVs the new norm.

The CFI grants would do much more than benefit current and future EV drivers. Public charging infrastructure presents a huge opportunity for Virginia's workforce. According to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the growing need for EV charging stations creates a major job opportunity for America's electricians. In fact, the IBEW has developed a national certification standard for training the workers who will install our nation's EV charging equipment.

"Once we get shovels in the ground to put these chargers up, it is going to mean jobs, jobs, jobs and more jobs," Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said in 2022 after speaking with an IBEW apprentice in Virginia. "The jobs that are good-paying union jobs all over the country, in every pocket of this country, and the training that goes with [them] is a huge opportunity for communities."

During the last grant round in 2023, Henrico County (Richmond area) was awarded \$1.4 million to build 38 EV charging ports at seven publicly accessible locations, including libraries, parks and recreation sites visited by millions of residents and tourists.

The second round of CFI funding will soon be open this spring. Almost 50 applicants across 22 states received funding in the first round. Virginia localities must be proactive to get its share in the upcoming grant cycle.

Let's make sure all Virginians can benefit from our transition to clean transportation. Electric vehicles are fun to drive, require less maintenance, don't use gas and have zero tailpipe pollution (because there is no tailpipe).

Tell your local leaders to take advantage of this opportunity and apply for CFI grant funding, for the good of Virginia's environment and its workforce.

Stuart Gardner of Charlottesville is a program director at Generation180, a national clean energy nonprofit. Prior to joining Generation180, he led go-to-market strategy, product development and launch campaign planning in the automotive industry. David Pala handles marketing and communications for IBEW Local 26 in Winchester. His portfolio also includes advocating for the transition to a sustainable future, growing SWaM contractors and implementing green energy workforce development....

[Read more on The Virginian-Pilot](#)

[Report misinformation](#)