

Straight Talk with PG&E: Craig Castro

Season 2, Episode 1: EV Fleet program

- Hey, everybody. Before we start our show, I have an update. We have a new name. Welcome to "Real Talk with PG&E." I'm your host, Tatiana Manning, and I support our Voice of the Customer team here at PG&E. Today we're gonna talk about something I find really cool. PG&E recently collaborated with a company called Zum to deploy the nation's first 100% electric school bus fleet in Oakland. We'll also talk about PG&E's EV Fleet program and other rebates and incentives. Today in studio, I have Craig Castro, EV Fleet onboarding specialist of our Clean Energy Transportation team. Thank you for being here today, Craig.

- Thanks for having me.

- Craig, can you tell us about PG&E's collaboration with Zum and how that helped the Oakland Unified School District?

- Yeah, so this was the nation's first fully electric school bus fleet, truly pioneering the next wave of transportation for school children with electric vehicles. So, this was a huge project, consisted of 74 electric school buses, 74 vehicle-to-grid chargers. The customer was eligible for up to \$1.3 million in potential incentives and rebates on top of the infrastructure upgrades that they received in bringing that new service to their site. It was a very collaborative relationship between PG&E, Zum, and the Oakland Unified School District, and we all just wanted to work together. This was kind of a first project of its kind, so we all threw our heads together and made sure that it was a fully successful deployment.

- That's pretty awesome. What is the goal of PG&E'S EV Fleet program?

- Yeah, so the simple goal of the program is just to make EV adoption easier for our commercial customers, and that's for medium duty, heavy-duty off-road vehicles. So the EV Fleet program assists PG&E customers who are seeking to electrify their medium-duty, heavy-duty off-road vehicles. Participants receive installation of infrastructure up to a new customer meter at no cost to them. They also receive incentives and rebates to help offset their out-of-pocket costs for the construction of the chargers and for the chargers themselves. They also receive comprehensive support through the process. They get a liaison to this utility, essentially, that's gonna help them navigate that process from start to finish. There's also, right now, incentives and rebates that customers can take advantage of, whether it's through PG&E or the state, that there's state funding opportunities. There's federal grants available as well. There's even other infrastructure grants that they can take advantage of to help bring down those costs as well.

- I really love that there's the incentives available for our customers as well as the rebates. What are some of the key perks of going electric for fleets, especially when it comes to saving money and helping the environment?

- When it comes to savings on the financial side, fuel costs are gonna be drastically reduced. It's a lot cheaper to charge an electric vehicle than it is your internal combustion comparable vehicle, as well as the maintenance too.

- Craig, it's more than just about saving money on fuel, it's actually having environmental impacts, correct?

- That's correct, yeah. You're seeing less greenhouse gas emissions tend to result in lower asthma cases. You're seeing reduced respiratory issues in people that are in areas that are heavily condensed with greenhouse gas emissions. On the school bus side, you're seeing kids that are testing better in schools, they're having better attendance. And it's a quieter ride for 'em, so it's less distracting in the morning when they're going to school, so they feel better prepared to start their school day.

- What tips do you have for businesses looking to switch to electric vehicles, and how can PG&E help them along the way?

- Usually the biggest piece of advice that I share when I go to any event or talk to any customer, engage with your utility as soon as possible. It is a lengthy process to get a new service installed for your EV charging needs. So, as soon as you know that you want to go down that road, start engaging with your utility. We have a grant funding tool, where you can put in your five-digit zip code. You can tell us what type of vehicles you're looking to get, and it'll tell you exactly what type of funding sources you may be eligible for. That's a huge resource that's free for customers to access. There's even vehicles. So, if you're just starting out and you don't even know what type of vehicle you want, you can go to our tool, fleets.pge.com, and you can see what type of vehicles are currently on the market which may meet your needs. We also have some really cool calculators on there, so you can calculate your annual fuel costs, you can calculate your total cost of ownership. You can take a look at a mock simulation of our business EV rate, which we offer, and then you can see how much it'll cost you per month to fuel your vehicles. We also have rate comparison calculators and other things on the website, and that's all completely complimentary. No login required. You just go to the website, and you can start playing around.

- Thank you so much, Craig, for coming into the studio today.

- Thanks for having me.

- Well, for the folks out there listening, be sure to stream "Real Talk with PG&E" and find more helpful tools and resources at pge.com/realtalk. See you next time.