RESEARCH SUMMARY

Planning for Electric Vehicles in Rural Communities

Climate Change, Community Health, and Rural Opportunity

Thoughtful planning, partnerships, and investment in charging infrastructure can lead the way toward a cleaner, healthier, and more prosperous future for rural communities.

INTRODUCTION

Electric vehicles (EVs) are no longer a futuristic concept—they are becoming a practical and increasingly common choice for everyday travel.

For rural and small-town communities, EVs present both opportunities and challenges. They can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower transportation costs, improve air quality, and support healthier, more resilient communities. At the same time, rural areas require thoughtful planning for charging infrastructure, partnerships, and accessibility.

As the transition accelerates, municipalities have an important role to play in ensuring rural communities are not left behind.

WHY IT MATTERS

Reduces Emissions
Transportation is one of Ontario's largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions—about 32%.

Improves Health
Cleaner air and lower noise benefit physical and mental health.

Strengthens Economies
Lower fuel and maintenance costs for residents, attracts visitors, businesses, and investment.

Builds Resilience
EVs reduce reliance on gas, support energy security, and prepare communities for the future.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **Planning is Essential**
Integrate EVs into official plans, transportation plans, zoning, parking strategies, and climate action plans.

2. **Partnerships Drive Results**
Collaborate with utilities, provincial/federal governments, Indigenous communities, and local organizations to leverage resources and expertise.

3. **Infrastructure Enables Uptake**
Identify priority locations for public charging, streamline permitting, and support fleet electrification for municipal and community use.

4. **Equity and Access Matter**
Plan for equitable charger placement and ensure rural and underserved communities benefit.

5. **Municipal Leadership Counts**
Lead by example—use local data, set targets, and champion EV readiness.

HOW PLANNING CAN SUPPORT EVs IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Supportive Policy Frameworks
Use zoning, bylaws, and incentives to encourage EV-ready development and charging infrastructure.

Infrastructure and Services
Plan for a network of Level 2 and Level 3 chargers at key destinations and along travel routes.

Partnerships and Collaboration
Work together to leverage funding, share knowledge, and close infrastructure gaps.

Community Health and Equity
Cleaner air, lower noise, and more affordable transportation improve health and quality of life.

Economic and Tourism Benefits
EV-ready communities attract visitors, new residents, and businesses.

Electric vehicles offer a path to lower emissions, healthier communities, and stronger rural economies. Planning today ensures rural communities are ready for a cleaner, more connected transportation future.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full research report is available at:
waynecaldwell.ca/projects/planning-electric-vehicles

RESEARCH CREDITS

Principal Researcher: Dr. Wayne Caldwell
Collaborators: Derry Walls
Jason Gebhardt

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