UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation | Informing effective and equitable environmental policy

Expanding Public Electric Vehicle Charging in South Los Angeles

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES, RESOURCES, AND IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

As part of the Climate Action–Community-driven eLectric vEhicle chArging solutioN (CA–CLEAN) project, researchers at the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation worked to improve procedural equity in the siting of public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations by co-designing charging infrastructure with communities. The team partnered with three community-based organizations across the City of Los Angeles, including Redeemer Community Partnership in South Los Angeles (L.A.). Between 2024 and 2025, the team held three workshops in each community to understand residents' perspectives and preferences regarding EVs and public charging. This guide 1) summarizes what the community shared during the workshops and through written surveys, 2) presents key challenges and opportunities, and 3) provides an overview of pathways to charger installation. It also provides a list of financial resources to support EV purchases and home charging.

SOUTH LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT SNAPSHOT

Across the three workshops in South Los Angeles, an average of **25** participants attended.

Who participated. Approximately 16% of participants identify as White, 45% as Black or African American, 3.2% as Native American, 3.2% as Asian, and 32% as other (the majority of which listed Latinx, Mexican, or mixed race). More than half of the participants, 61%, identify as Latinx or Hispanic. Half of the participants are aged 45–60, and the median annual household income is $47,000. On average, participants have lived in South Los Angeles for 21 years.

Experience with electric vehicles. Many of the participants in South Los Angeles are familiar with EVs. Nearly 6 in 10 participants, 59%, either currently own or lease an EV or have in the past.

Community context. Participants largely perceive South Los Angeles to be lacking EVs and charging infrastructure. Our survey found that 59% of participants believe there are not enough people driving EVs in their community, and 82% of participants believe there are not enough EV chargers in South Los Angeles. One participant stated, "*Within our community, [EVs] are not as common. On the larger scale across L.A., [we] see more EVs…[the] lack of charging stations holds back a lot of people from having access to EVs*."

> **"[I might] see people driving EVs, but they don't live in the community; [they are] just driving by."**
>
> *—Workshop participant*

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APRIL 2026

Electric vehicles

Charging access and availability

Charging behaviors

Reliability

Affordability

What is needed to rely on an EV

THEMES FROM COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Perspectives on Electric Vehicles and Charging (Workshop 1)

The first discussion focused on community members' broader desires for clean mobility and perspectives on public EV charging. As many of the South Los Angeles participants already own or lease EVs, they entered the first workshop with firsthand experience, highlighting challenges with charging availability, access, and reliability, emphasizing poor user charging behaviors, and offering insights on affordability.

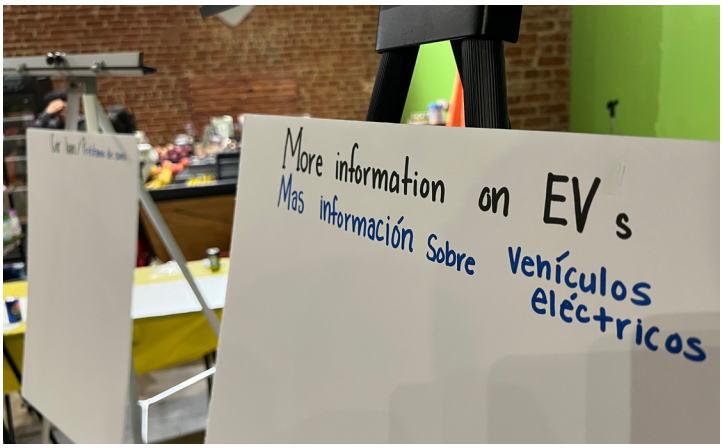
On EVs. Considering many of the South Los Angeles participants already drive EVs, they expressed generally positive perspectives. Most neutral or negative commentary focused on the need for education on EVs, concerns about EV technology, and the lack of EVs in their community overall.

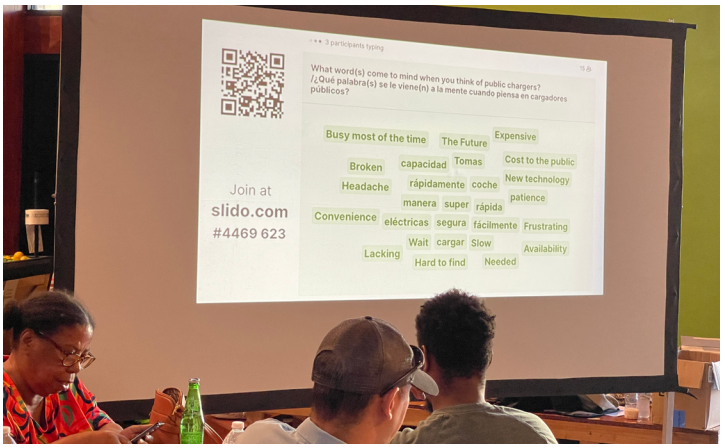
> **"South L.A. is cut off from everything and not associated with a lot of luxury … driving an EV is considered luxury."**
>
> *—Workshop participant*

On charging access and availability. A common thread throughout the discussion was enjoyment of EVs among owners — with many vehicles purchased with support from state or regional incentive programs — though charging access remains a challenge. Participants without EVs were aware of these broader issues, with one stating, "*I don't own an EV car, but I know there is a dire need for charging stations in our community*."

> **"My car is cool, but charging is trouble."**
>
> *—Workshop participant*

On charging behaviors. Participants cited several instances of undesirable charging behaviors, including experiences with other EV drivers cutting in line while people are waiting to charge, or removing a charger from a vehicle while the individual was still charging. One participant stated, *"[It is] ruthless out there. … [EVs are] supposed to be for the*





Photographs from the First and Second South Los Angeles Community Workshops in April and July 2024. Yifang Zhu

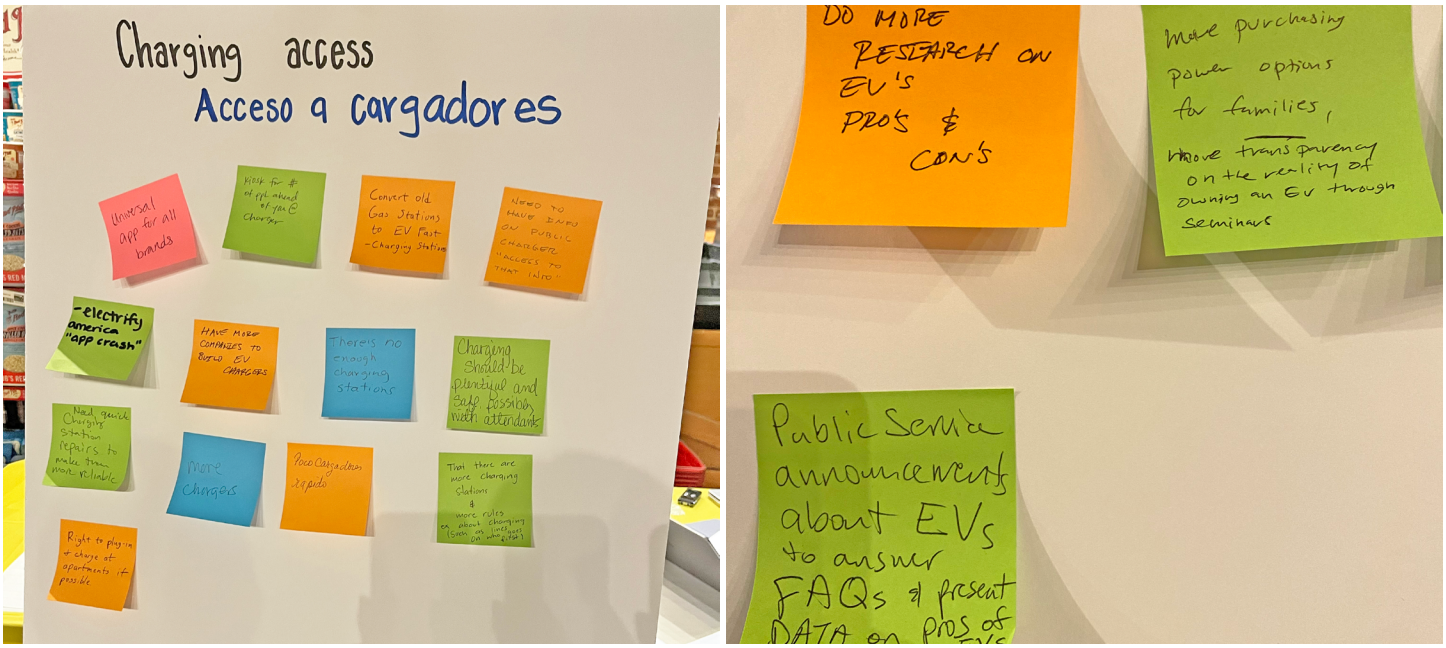
environment, but [there is] no camaraderie at all when it comes to charging." Another suggested, *"There should be more rules for charging … someone came with another car and cut the line, so they took my spot and the spot after, and I did not want to cause an argument."*

On reliability. One participant noted an experience when charging applications listed stations as working but were broken upon arrival. Another clarified that he loves his EV, but the lack of working chargers is his only complaint. A third participant explicitly stated the following:

> **"Charging technology does not work, especially [in] South Central."**
>
> *—Workshop participant*

On affordability. Affordability was discussed both in the context of purchasing EVs and charging. One participant commented that EVs are more accessible now than in the past because prices have decreased. Another stated that the opportunity for several years of free charging incentivized them to purchase an EV. Several emphasized that charging their car is cheaper than gas. However, participants also briefly discussed concerns about the price of electricity for charging, with one stating, "*Something very important is the price of electricity. EVgo is very expensive … price is high all the time*," also suggesting that this cost cuts into what drivers would otherwise save on gas.

On what participants need to rely on an EV. In the final exercise of the workshop, participants used sticky notes to provide insights in response to the prompt: **What support, financial or other, do you and your household need to rely on an EV for your transportation needs?** (see photos below). Response categories included "Charging access," "More information on EVs," "Help finding incentives," "Car loan," and "Other needs." On incentives, participants highlighted the need for more charging incentives from large companies such as EVgo and Electrify America, as well as emphasized the need for one website — a one-stop-shop design — to find and apply for all incentives. Comments on charging access featured several ideas to improve efficiency in the charging experience, such as a universal phone application for all charging companies, a kiosk or application to keep track of charging queues, converting gas stations to fast-charging stations, and attendants working at charging stations. Regarding car loans, participants suggested lower interest rates and more access to education. As far as more information on EVs, participants suggested public service announcements and seminars to present data clearly and answer key questions.



Photographs from Visioning Exercise in the First South Los Angeles Community Workshop

Charging Priorities and Location Preferences (Workshop 2)

The second phase of community discussion focused on specific charging priorities and perspectives on potential charging locations (see Figure 2).

Live polls and discussion emphasized key perspectives. As Figure 1b demonstrates, participants ranked the most important features of a charging station, selecting reliability as the top choice, availability as the second, and affordability as the third. The prioritization of reliability and availability likely reflects negative experiences participants have had with broken chargers and long wait times.

When asked what public charging advances or innovations participants would prioritize, the gas station model for public charging, as well as additional fast chargers vs. slower Level 2 chargers, were two heavily prioritized advances over even affordability (i.e., providing the cheapest charging possible). The need for attendants as part of the gas station model was emphasized, and the importance of safety at charging stations was mentioned multiple times throughout the workshop.

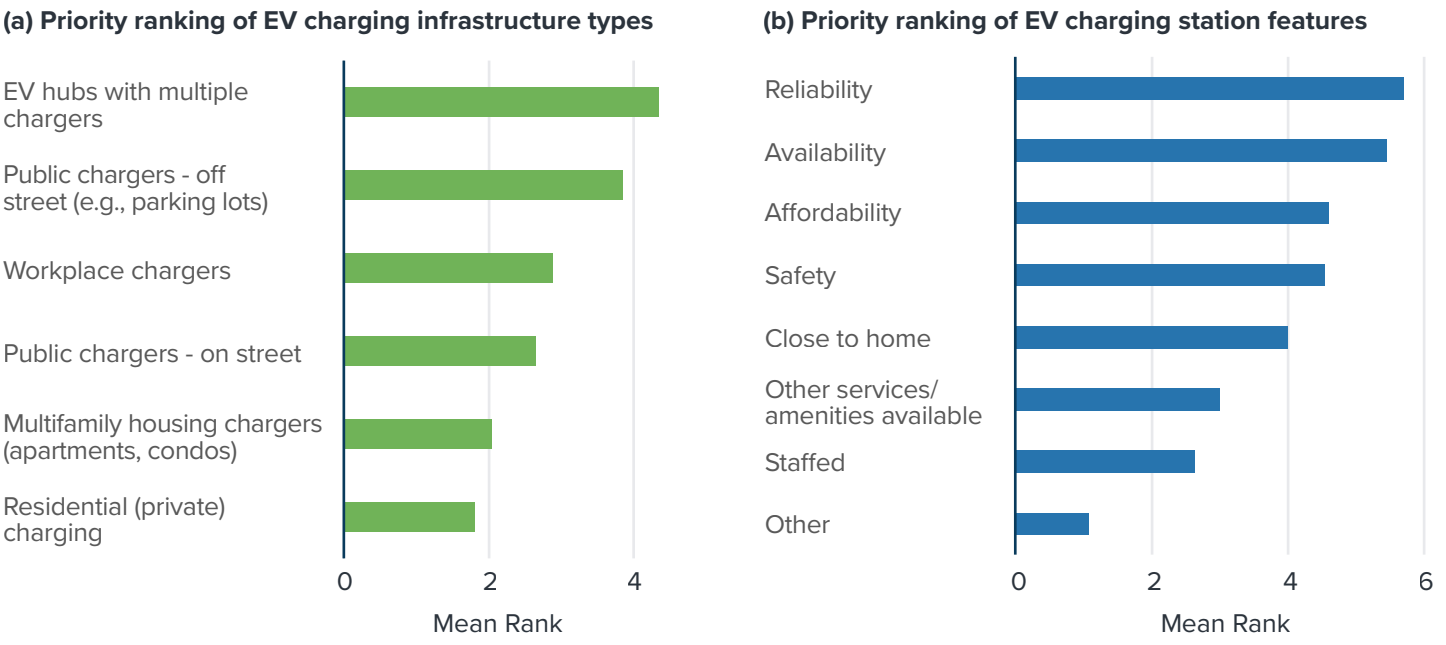
When asked about **the number of charging ports** at each charging station, responses varied widely, with most clustered around 10–15 ports. Regarding **how far participants are willing to drive to access a charging station**, again, responses varied, but many grouped around the 1- to 3-mile range, with a median response around 5 miles, and some participants willing to drive up to 20 miles. One participant responded to these poll results — in which another participant had stated they drive 40 minutes to reach a charger.

> **"Driving 10 miles or 40 minutes to charge your vehicle is like you'll be punished because you're doing what the government says you should be doing [which is following California's strict environmental standards]."**
>
> *—Workshop participant*

Facilitated discussions and polling on charging amenities emphasized the importance of focusing on access to quick, reliable charging. Beyond that primary goal, participants were most interested in grocery stores, followed by a three-way tie for

FIGURE 1

South Los Angeles Community Priorities for Electric Vehicle Charging



nearby coffee shops or restaurants, indoor spaces with air conditioning, and parks or playgrounds. One participant presented a concern with increasing amenities alongside charging infrastructure, wondering whether that would affect pricing and suggesting that if companies hosting amenities are trying to incentivize people to charge, this could be "a further way for capitalism." Other amenity suggestions included restrooms, security or emergency phones, vending machines, and car washes.

> **"If we're adding amenities, will it change the [electricity rate paid at charging stations]?"**
>
> *—Workshop participant*

Affordability was underscored several times during the second workshop as well. As mentioned previously, there was a concern expressed about increasing charging rates if amenities are added to charging stations. Another participant shared concern about whether EVs are economical, going on to say, "*A gas car can last for 30 years, depending on how much people use it, in comparison to an EV that you charge maybe every 15 days … and does that not affect the battery? I have a Chevy Volt, and I hope it lasts around 15 years, but [I'm] not sure it will outlast gas cars*."

> **"The idea behind EV cars is to combat pollution, but my concern is that EVs are not economical because of their price and time."**
>
> *—Workshop participant*

Concerns with increasing charging prices were mentioned again in this workshop, as another participant noted, "*in regards of affordability … [price of charging is] going up continuously … I think it's still up 30%. It's better than gas. However, the inconvenience is that I have to go off-peak hours … midnight to five in the morning … I really don't know how affordable it's going to be in the upcoming months or years. This thing is getting very expensive*."

Action Planning (Workshop 3)

The third community discussion featured a presentation and dialogue on charging pathways facilitated by the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation, live polling, and a presentation by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP).

In LADWP's presentation, their staff shared a statistic that 80% of charging occurs at home, 15% at work, and 5% in public. However, **our polling during the workshop illuminates a key difference in the South Los Angeles community compared to the entirety of Los Angeles**. When workshop participants were asked to prioritize the type of chargers most important to them, EV hubs were ranked the highest over on- and off-street public chargers and workplace charging; and importantly, **residential charging was ranked the lowest level of importance** (Figure 1a).

When explicitly asked what support households would need to rely on an EV to meet their transportation needs in a short-answer live poll, **financial incentives and rebates** emerged as the top response; other common responses were focused on **charging reliability** and **access**. Specific responses included the following:

> **"incentives for purchasing and free charging"**
>
> **"monetary support"**
>
> **"the ability to have access to charge with ease"**
>
> **"the right to charge at home/apartment"**
>
> **"distinct and easy charging (some sort of clear line [for drivers waiting to charge] please)"**
>
> *—Participant responses on support needed to enable EV reliance*

Respondents provided feedback for government agencies promoting EV uptake in South Los Angeles through another poll. Participants highlighted **education**, stating "*provide data and resources, i.e.*

costs associated with repairs," and "*promote more information about efficiency regarding EVs,*" and "*info that actually reaches consumers.*" **Incentives and affordability** were common replies as well, with participants requesting "*more incentives and affordable options"* for vehicles, and **charging access**, with one participant suggesting *"pass[ing] a bill that would require easier access to EV chargers"* and another simply requesting *"to have more EV charging stations available in low-income communities."* Staff from our partnering community-based organization, Redeemer Community Partnership, summarized the importance of education and tailored support for South Los Angeles:

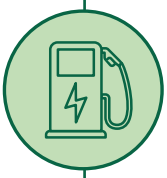
> **"A lot of these agencies think that we're just going to hand out a flyer and that our communities [will] say, okay, yes, I'll do it. There's a lot of education; there's a lot of accessibility. It took us a long time. Thank you … We're all a community. … it's important for these government agencies to see that it's not just 'here's a flyer.'"**
>
> *—Staff from Redeemer Community Partnership*

Importantly, 91% of participants in the third and final workshop in South Los Angeles want to be part of future discussions with Redeemer Community Partnership on potential installation incentive applications and planning. When asked in a written exit survey about how involved they have been in conversations, planning, and decision-making around clean transportation in their community, the average response was a 7.6 out of 10. This score was higher than both the average score of 6 reported in a pre-discussion survey administered at the start of the first workshop to the entire participant group and the average score of 6.8 reported by a control group surveyed during the same period as the final workshop.

Additionally, among the seven South Los Angeles participants who completed both pre- and post-workshop surveys, responses to this question increased by an average of 2 points. Together, these patterns suggest that participation in the workshop(s) was associated with higher perceived involvement in clean transportation decision-making, although the sample size was insufficient to formally assess statistical significance.

Photograph from the First South Los Angeles Community Workshop. Yifang Zhu

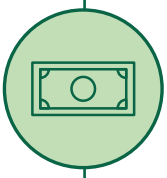
KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Challenge #1: Limited access to working chargers.

Many South Los Angeles electric vehicle drivers do not have access to home charging, and public charging options are limited and hindered by long wait times and negative charging behaviors.

Opportunity #1: Cities require clear, actionable means of coordination across agencies with funds to install and maintain chargers. Responsible parties should experiment with measures such as staffed or unstaffed monitoring of chargers, real-time queuing, and reservations for users. In particular, South Los Angeles participants suggested various technology advances, such as one universal phone application for all chargers, to improve the efficiency of the charging experience.



Challenge #2: Affordability.

Participants already driving EVs expressed concerns over increases in electricity rates at public chargers. This can add to the existing energy burden for households in South Los Angeles. Vehicle affordability was emphasized in our community discussions as well, though prices for some EVs are trending downward.

Opportunity #2: Power utilities taking the lead to install and manage more chargers would have multiple benefits, including affordable electricity pricing for public chargers. Community-based organizations can also apply for funding to own and operate chargers, though technical assistance programs for funding application support are often necessary (and few such programs exist), and community-based organizations may not prefer to own chargers and manage their operation and maintenance. There are also opportunities for community-based organizations to partner with private charge point operators (CPOs) to apply for funding to install chargers with affordable pricing. Communities should also receive more education on incentive program offerings, including upfront grants for EV purchase and fair financing options.

Challenge #3: Lack of meaningful community involvement in this space.

Our survey of participants suggested there has not been sufficient South Los Angeles resident involvement in clean transportation decision-making thus far, but South Los Angeles residents believe it is important, with nearly 95% of participants from the first workshop rating participation importance between 8 and 10 on a 10-point scale.

Opportunity #3: Agencies and other partners should make concerted efforts to involve community members in key conversations and decision-making on the siting of chargers. As described above, nearly all participants who attended the final workshop want to continue to be part of this conversation and effect change in South Los Angeles.

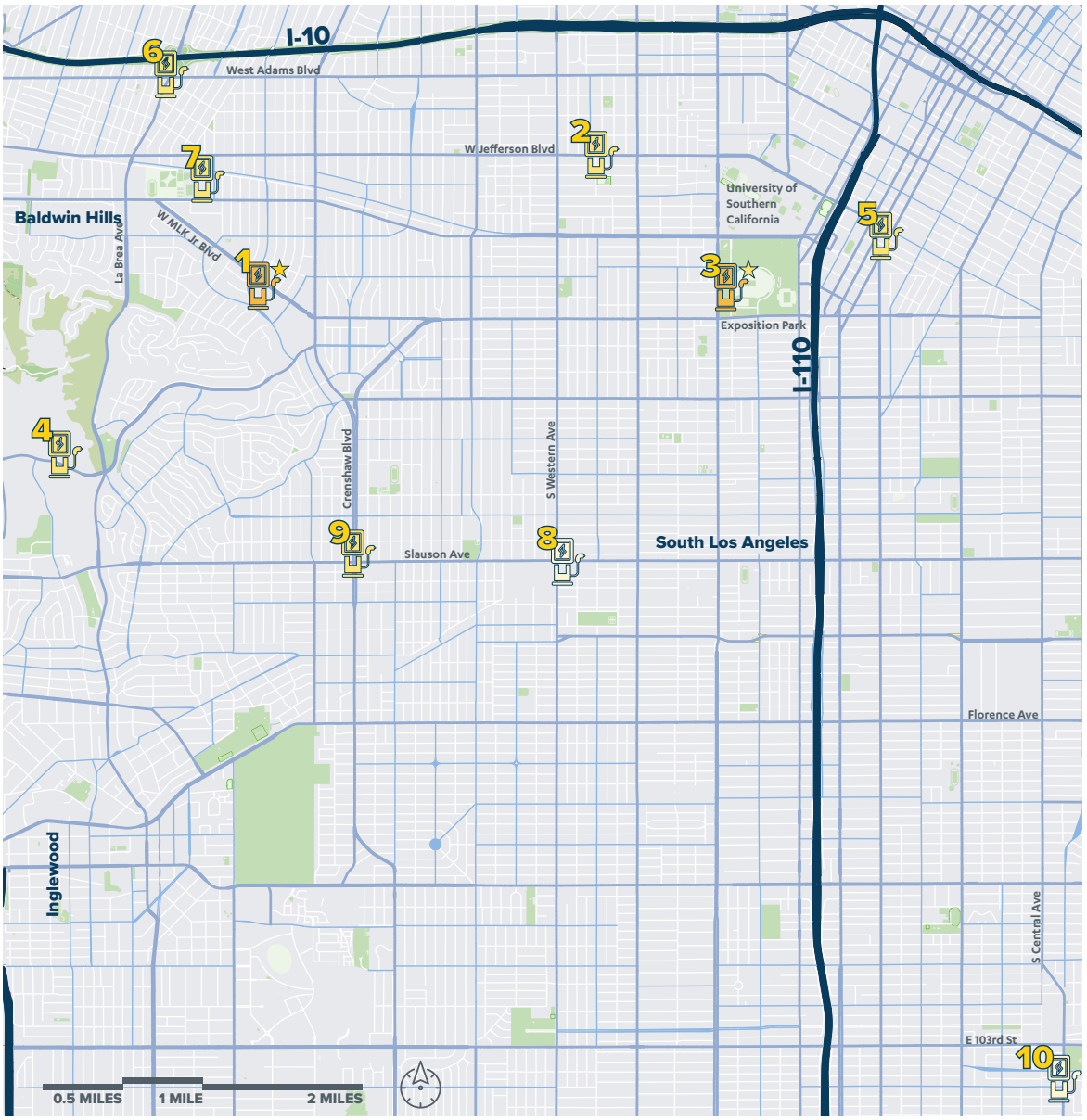
PRIORITIZED CHARGING LOCATIONS

The map in Figure 2 highlights the top 10 electric vehicle charging locations that were selected by Redeemer Community Partnership (RCP), and then voted on by participants. These results came from two live polls conducted at workshops, in partnership with RCP, where community members ranked potential EV charging stations in terms of neighborhood needs. The highest ranked locations, in dark gold, included Buckingham Senior Apartments and Exposition Park, near the swimming stadium. The lowest ranked locations, in light yellow, include Ted Watkins Memorial Park and Slauson Super Mall.

> "At this point, any DC [direct current] fast charging location in South L.A. would be beneficial. There is a charging desert here."
>
> *—Workshop participant*

FIGURE 2

CA-CLEAN: South Los Angeles Charging Location Preferences



Key of Ranked Preferences

- Highest Preference
- Medium Preference
- Low Preference

1. Buckingham Senior Apartments
2. Denker Recreation Center
3. Exposition Park
4. Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Center
5. Mercado La Paloma
6. NewLife LA Church
7. Rancho Cienega Recreation Center
8. Slauson Super Mall
9. S Crenshaw Blvd & Slauson Ave
10. Ted Watkins Memorial Park

OVERVIEW OF PATHWAYS FOR MORE CHARGERS

Here is a summary of pathways for more chargers in South Los Angeles and the city of Los Angeles more broadly, as laid out in the final workshop held in each community.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Personal residential charging

The easiest path with a parking space and land, but not readily available for all; electrical panel upgrades may be required beyond Level 1 charging

INCENTIVES AVAILABLE | **PRIVATE USE**

Multifamily housing chargers

Landlords can apply for publicly available incentives, including through LADWP, and use private companies for installation, operation, and maintenance; e.g., California Energy Commission (CEC) Communities in Charge incentives

INCENTIVES AVAILABLE | **PRIVATE USE**

Workplace charging

Requires employer participation, sufficient parking, and may require electrical panel upgrades

INCENTIVES AVAILABLE | **PRIVATE USE**

Chargers at businesses

Installed through LADWP request process (LADWP does not own chargers), through available incentives (e.g., CEC CaleVIP), or private companies (e.g., Tesla)

INCENTIVES AVAILABLE | **PRIVATE & PUBLIC USE**

PUBLIC PROPERTY

Off-street property (e.g., parks/libraries)

e.g., Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LA DOT)

PUBLIC USE

Streetlight chargers

e.g., Los Angeles Bureau of Streetlighting (BSL)

PUBLIC USE

EV hub sites

e.g., LADWP; two in progress, one in Gardena and another in Panorama City

PUBLIC USE

Chargers for public use at **other public sites** (city lots, healthcare facilities, etc.) installed through publicly available incentives

INCENTIVES AVAILABLE | **PUBLIC USE**

NEXT STEPS

- In collaboration with Redeemer Community Partnership, the research team is sharing findings with the community through this document and related resources.
- The team is preparing a **report presenting key findings for three communities across the city of Los Angeles**: South Los Angeles (community partner: Redeemer Community Partnership), Wilmington/Carson (community partner: Coalition for a Safe Environment), and Pacoima (community partner: Pacoima Beautiful).
- Researchers will **engage with state and local agencies**, including LADWP, to share deliverables and discuss findings.
- Researchers will continue working with Redeemer Community Partnership to identify how our team and other stakeholders can **best support South Los Angeles in a just transition to clean energy and transportation.**

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR EVS AND CHARGING

EV purchase incentives

- South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) Replace Your Ride: up to $12,000 to replace an older vehicle with a newer vehicle (Plug-In Hybrid, Battery, or Fuel Cell EV)
- Driving Clean Assistance Program (DCAP): If you do not have a vehicle to scrap and you live in an eligible neighborhood, you can opt for DCAP rather than Replace Your Ride and you can also receive financing assistance through a statewide network of trusted credit union partners.
- LADWP Used Electric Vehicle Rebate Program: up to $4,000 for the purchase of a used EV

EV charging incentives

- LADWP Residential EV Charger Rebate Program: up to $1,000 for a Level 2 charger and $250 for installation of a meter; additional $500 for income-eligible customers.
- South Coast AQMD Residential EV Charging Incentive Program: low-income residents only, purchase rebate for $500 for a new Level 2 charger
- U.S. Department of Energy Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Tax Credit (through June 30, 2026): low-income communities only, up to 30% of total cost, up to $1,000

View available incentives through a government-operated and maintained website: https://driveclean.ca.gov/

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