

Expanding Public Electric Vehicle Charging in Pacoima

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 Pacoima Beautiful. 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.

PACOIMA PARTICIPANT SNAPSHOT

Across the three workshops in Pacoima, an average of **35** participants attended. Many participants shared their insights in Spanish, which we translated to English.

Who participated. Approximately 43.5% of participants identify as White, 1.4% as Black or African American, 1.4% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.4% as Asian, and 47.8% as other (all of which listed Latinx, Mexican, or Hispanic). Almost all of the participants identify as Latinx or Hispanic (98.5%). About a third of participants are aged 45–60, and three-quarters of participants are aged 45 or older. Median annual household income is \$35,000. On average, participants have lived in Pacoima for approximately 24 years.

Experience with electric vehicles. The vast majority of Pacoima participants (89%) have never owned or leased an EV.

Community context. Participants largely perceive an increase in EVs and charging infrastructure, but neither is prevalent in the Pacoima area. Our survey found that 61% of participants believe there are not enough people driving EVs in their community, and 59% of participants believe there are not enough EV chargers in Pacoima. One stated, “I travel out to the beach a lot ... in that area I do notice a little bit more [EVs than in our community].”

“I’ve been seeing [EVs] around a lot more now, but I still think it’s not in our area as much as it should be.”

—Workshop participant



Electric vehicles



Charging access and availability



Charging behaviors



Reliability



Affordability



Education



What is needed to rely on an EV



Challenges with Available EV Purchase Incentive Programs

THEMES FROM COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Perspectives on Electric Vehicles and Charging (Workshop 1)

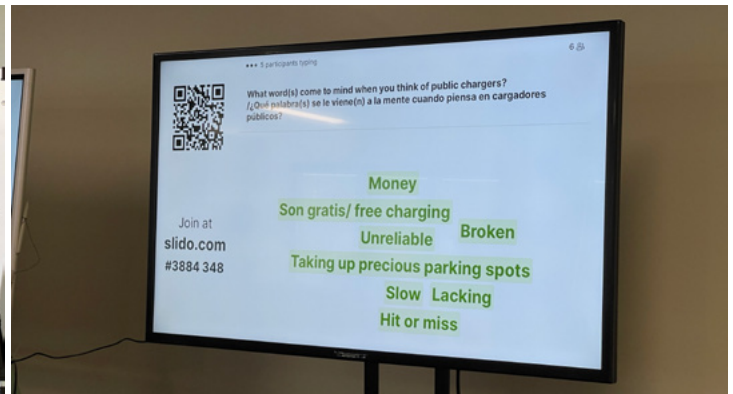
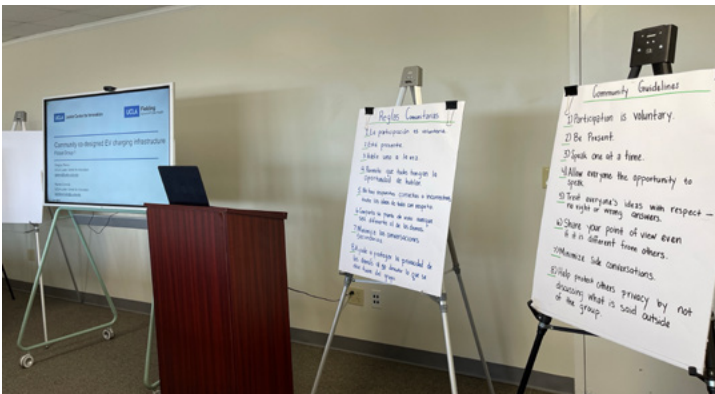
The first discussion focused on community members' broader desires for clean mobility and perspectives on public EV charging. As many of our Pacoima participants do not own or lease EVs, they entered the first workshop with many important questions about EVs and charging, and outlooks on charging access as potential future adopters rather than current users of the infrastructure.

Notably, participants asked many questions during the first discussion. Participants posed numerous questions on EVs, including on batteries, range, and affordability. Questions ranged from more general topics, such as the longevity of EV batteries and whether the price of charging is different at home versus at public stations, to very specific questions about battery recycling costs.

On EVs. Perspectives on EVs were varied and driven by curiosity. One participant, an EV owner for over a year, commented that they enjoy their EV—though since most residents do not own EVs, this ownership

experience is not necessarily representative of the group. Participants asked questions about which original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) produce EVs, whether EVs will positively or negatively impact the environment, whether EV cars are primarily for local use or can be used for long distances, and more. One person also commented on potential negative grid impacts for EV charging, stating, *"I think in the long run, electric doesn't really work for our grid. It will put too much strain on the grid. I think it should be a mix of the two, EV and fuel cell [cars]."*

On charging access and availability. Despite a few participants owning or leasing an EV, participants had insightful comments on charging in Pacoima and nearby communities. Several had personal experiences with EVs and attempting to charge, with one participant stating, *"I rented out an electric vehicle. And finding a charging station, a working charging station, was nearly impossible. It just wasn't practical for me."*



Photographs from the First and Second Pacoima Community Workshops in April and August 2024. Yifang Zhu

Another participant recalled being “stranded” without enough range to reach a nearby charging station. One commented on excessively long charging lines, stating, “I thought it was a sale going on. That’s how long the lines were. And I was like, this is for Target? ... but ... it was the line to charge. I was like, Whoa! Like, this is not a sale. It’s just electric charging.”

A participant posed a question about charging access to accommodate travel, explaining that a charger previously sited in the community has since been removed. “For long trips, is it possible to find EV charging stations or not? Right here there was one next to a church and then they took it away—as a Pacoima Beautiful community member, I keep getting asked what happened to it, and I don’t know what to say.”

As far as the usefulness of infrastructure with limited charging options, another participant mentioned the need for coordination between individuals charging at a workplace when limited charging spots are available, asserting a need for “some kind of coordination where somebody [is] taking their car out so [the other person] can put their car in. And so that might not be practical for some people.”

On charging behaviors. Though not a focus of the discussion, participants cited a few instances of undesirable charging behaviors, both from personal experiences and what they’ve heard from others. A participant mentioned they heard about people removing a charger from a car while the individual was still charging, and another suggested that someone had turned off their charger while they were inside shopping at a store, but they didn’t realize it until they came back out.

“A lot of stations are being vandalized, or [otherwise] I don’t know the reason they’re offline. I don’t know why [charging] companies don’t maintain that.”

—Workshop participant

On reliability. Frequently broken chargers were mentioned, with one participant saying, “I’ve seen people lined up waiting for the chargers because they don’t all work, only a few work ... they’re wasting

their time just waiting there.” Another participant stated that it “was a challenge to find ones that weren’t broken or nonfunctioning ...”

On affordability. Affordability was discussed both in the context of purchasing EVs and charging. One participant said that EVs are a luxury, stating, “they’re not affordable. I don’t think they’re made for our community.” There were engaging discussions about the financial tradeoffs of EVs versus gas vehicles, with some participants broaching concerns about battery replacement costs, and others suggesting that the price of gasoline will fluctuate more than the price of EV charging. Some mentioned high prices at public charging stations.

On education. Community education on EVs and charging was mentioned throughout the workshop, and participants asked many questions, underlining the importance of outreach and education. Participants emphasized the value of youth education specifically, with one individual suggesting, “maybe these talks about cars ... especially about electric vehicles, it would be good to take it to high schoolers ... I want my kids to have a better future.” Another stated in English that “older teenagers are going to be the next drivers on the road. They probably need to know about the ins and outs of having an electric or a hybrid vehicle so that way when they get to be our age ... they can go ahead and purchase that vehicle ... because they’re knowledgeable.”

“We don’t know too much about it ... But we need information to know ... how much is that car [going to cost], that tire, how long is the car going to last, all those things.”

—Workshop participant

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 needing more education and outreach on available programs. Multiple participants simply noted “*more incentives*,” specifically for low-income communities.

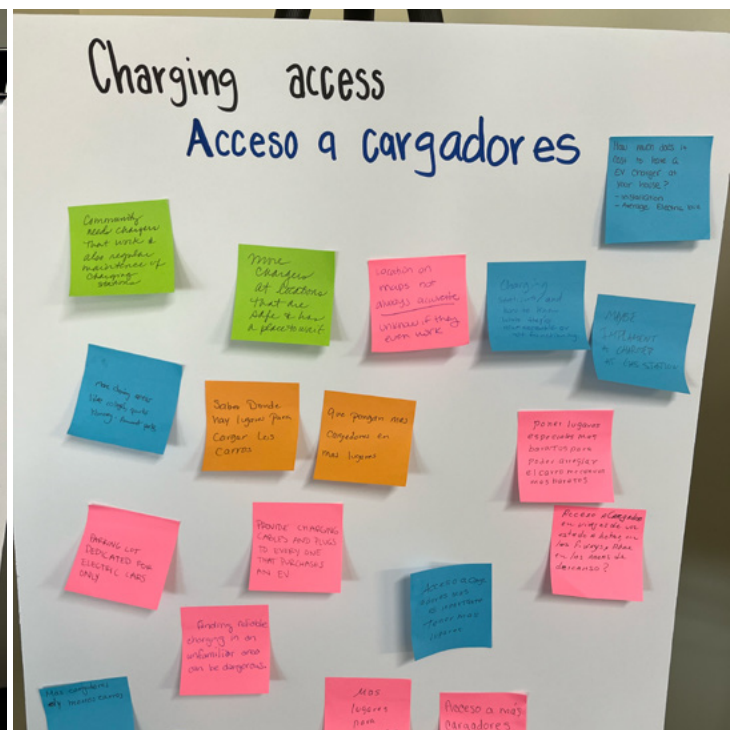
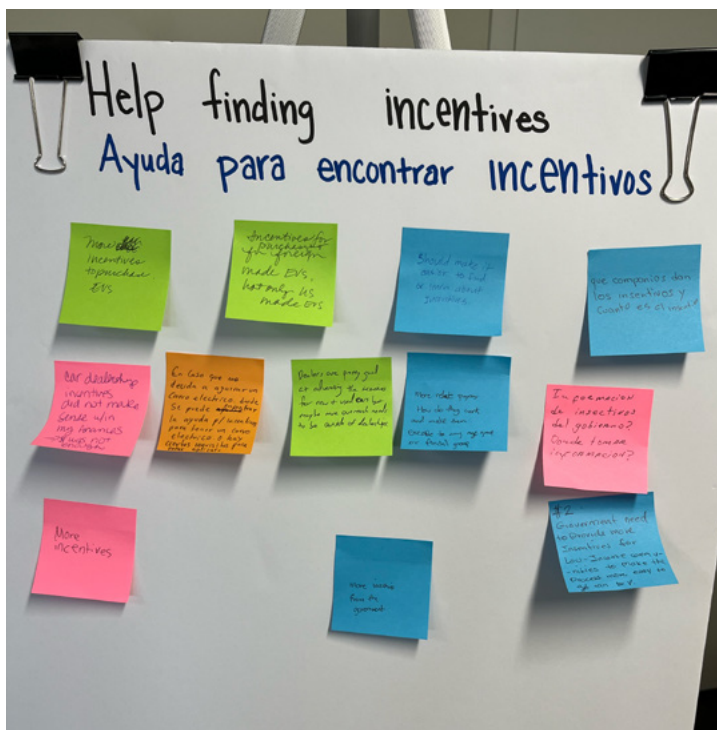
Comments on charging access centered on the need for more charging locations in the community, as well as along highway corridors. Participants also highlighted the importance of more helpful resources for easily finding charging locations and determining whether they are “*accessible or not functioning*” before individuals drive over to a station. One participant commented on safety, noting in English, “*Finding reliable charging in an unfamiliar area can be dangerous.*”

Regarding car loans, multiple participants requested more information about financing opportunities, and one also mentioned, in English, “*predatory lenders for low-income folks trying to finance.*” Regarding more information on EVs, participants again wrote multiple questions and emphasized the importance of more education and information coming to the community, with suggestions for more workshops and a government-sponsored forum on “*the pros and cons of EVs.*” In the “Other needs” category, questions on maintenance costs, vehicle prices, and environmental

impacts of EVs were posed, and daily fluctuations in charging prices, as well as battery replacement costs, were also mentioned.

On challenges with available EV purchase incentive programs. Notably, beyond the prompted discussion topics, participants also described frustrating experiences trying to enroll in government-funded EV incentive programs, such as the Replace Your Ride program—South Coast Air Quality Management District’s regional branch of the Clean Cars 4 All program. In multiple cases, participants were quoted one interest rate for their vehicle purchase, but as the process continued, the rate increased to a point where they could not continue with enrollment in the program and ultimately neither received an incentive nor purchased an EV.

One individual stated in English, “*I was so sad, frustrated, and cried because they made us fill out all this paperwork all for nothing ... My credit score was affected, too, which was unfortunate.*” Another person shared their experience, stating in English, “*...when I got to the financing part of things ... [the interest rate] was way too high and very different from what was being told in the program ... people were being led astray ... In the end, I couldn’t get my EV.*”



Photographs from Visioning Exercise in the First Pacoima Community Workshop. © Rachel Connolly

Charging Priorities and Location Preferences (Workshop 2)

The second phase of community discussion focused on specific charging priorities and perspectives on potential charging locations.

Live polls and discussion emphasized key perspectives. As Figure 1 (b) demonstrates, participants ranked the most important features of a charging station, selecting safety as the top choice, affordability the second, and close to home third. Safety was mentioned throughout the discussion in the previous workshop as well, and affordability was certainly emphasized throughout the workshop series.

When asked what public charging advances or innovations participants would prioritize by ranking them in order, **affordability** (cheapest charging possible) was ranked first, followed by the **gas station model for EV charging**, and then a **universal smartphone charging app** that can be used for all EV chargers. When the topic of prioritizing fast chargers versus more, slower chargers arose as an example of such an advance, one participant also noted in English that “*if we had more of the slower ones, then there’s more of a chance that we can use them,*” referencing how often fast chargers break down and become unavailable as a result.

When asked about **the number of charging ports** at each charging station, responses varied widely, with responses clustered around six to 10 ports and one response as high as 30. One participant suggested that the number differs depending on the type of charging station, suggesting four to six fast chargers versus 10 to 20 Level 2 chargers at a given station.

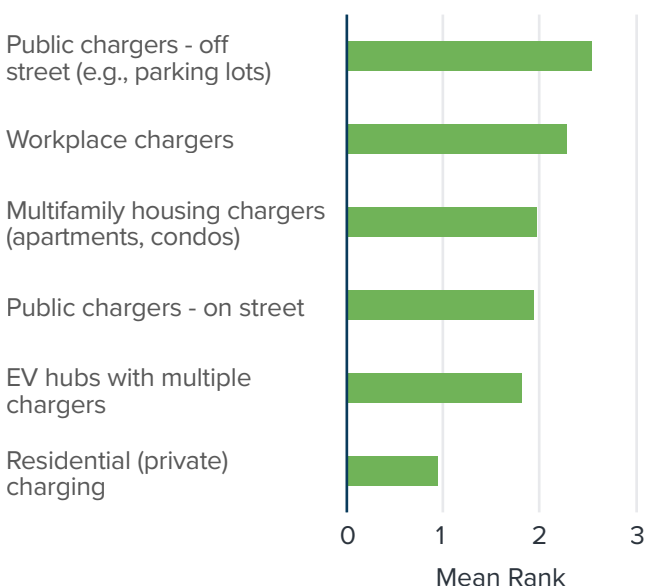
Regarding **how far participants are willing to drive to access a charging station**, again responses varied, but many responses grouped around the 1- to 2-mile range, with a median response around 2 miles. As a part of this conversation, the topic of wait times came up, with most individuals agreeing that 30 minutes is an appropriate time to wait, though one participant stated the importance of charging fitting into their lifestyle, clarifying that it may not be feasible to spend 30 minutes waiting in the car to charge if you have children or pets.

Facilitated discussions and polling on **charging amenities** emphasized the importance of focusing on access to quick, reliable charging; coffee shops or restaurants; and grocery stores, with a three-way tie on a ranking of those amenities.

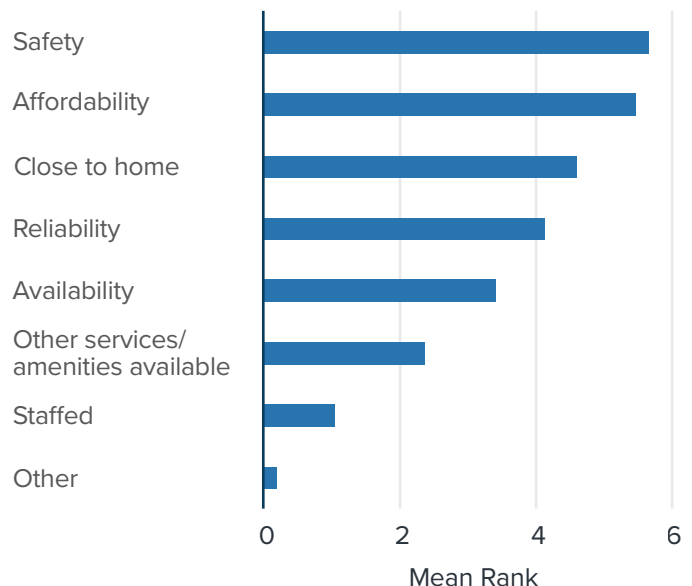
FIGURE 1

Pacoima Community Priorities for Electric Vehicle Charging

(a) Priority ranking of EV charging infrastructure types



(b) Priority ranking of EV charging station features



As the discussion on amenities continued, one participant posed a question on the implications of siting more chargers, stating, “Who is going to benefit—company-wise—in terms of installing chargers? ... [W]e need to know what benefits it’s going to bring to our community and the economy of the community.”

Affordability was underscored several times during the second workshop as well. One participant stated, “A family on average here makes less than \$60k as mentioned ... let’s talk about the reality now—the cost is not helpful to families. I have an EV, and I have seen more disadvantages with EVs than advantages ... to put a charger at home, you’re looking at a \$3,000 expense minimum ...” Another expressed concerns about supplemental charges from charging companies for individuals who charge at public chargers without using the company’s designated app.

Participants engaged in a lively discussion on potential charging locations (see Figure 2), though the conversation went beyond infrastructure siting, with **community perception of agency decision-making processes** emerging as a focal point.

“We show up to the [public] meetings, and we give our opinion, but they always end up doing what they want. Like the Metro, when we would go to their meetings, they would ask us [our preference], and at the end of the day, they ended up doing it their way ... their words always matter more than ours, despite our opinions.”

—Workshop participant

Another participant echoed this sentiment, stating, “I wonder how important is our opinion as a community to them, like [the previous participant] said, lots of times we give feedback and share with them our opinions, and in reality, they end up doing something totally different.” Someone else added in English, “So I see this a lot in this community ... it’s really sad. There are meetings, and there are reviews and [procedures] that they have to follow. But by the time we hear about it, it’s a done deal.”

Participants also brought up Whiteman Airport as a potential location for EV charging, which Pacoima Beautiful and residents have long advocated to be



Photograph from the First Pacoima Community Workshop, April 2024. 📷 Yifang Zhu

shut down due to safety concerns. One participant also mentioned light rail being built in the San Fernando Valley, suggesting in English that a “parking structure that also housed like a whole entire floor of EV chargers” accompany the public transit infrastructure. They also posed important questions regarding potential charging locations proposed by Pacoima Beautiful, including an area

with a large amount of street vendors that are, stated in English, “a vital part of the local economy ... where would you put these charging stations and how would that impact the local vendors?”

Community power was emphasized, with a participant expressing, “We need high-quality, low-cost chargers that will help our community and [we] should voice it.”

Action Planning (Workshop 3)

The third community discussion featured a presentation and dialogue on charging pathways facilitated by UCLA, 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 Pacoima community compared to the entirety of Los Angeles.** When workshop participants were asked to prioritize the type of chargers most important to participants, off-street public chargers were ranked the highest over workplace, multifamily, and on-street public chargers, 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, nearly all participants emphasized **financial support**, specifically mentioning the importance of reducing vehicle purchase costs and providing more financial resources through incentives.

Respondents provided feedback for government agencies promoting EV uptake in Pacoima through another poll. Participants highlighted **education**, stating “Give more information about economic benefits and technological advances to improve the environment,” and “more workshops like today’s.”

Incentives and affordability were common replies as well, with one participant suggesting, “I would like the car to be affordable or economic in price,” and another simply writing, “Incentives for low-income families.” One participant commented on the importance of resolving the “energy crisis,” and several others encouraged the importance of the transition to EVs (and suggested the government emphasize it more through outreach), with one participant simply stating, “It is a good idea for a good future.”

Importantly, 86% of participants in the third and final workshop in Pacoima want to be part of future discussions with Pacoima Beautiful 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 your community, the average response was a 9 out of 10. This was higher than both the average score of 5.4 reported in a pre-discussion survey administered at the start of the first workshop to the entire participant group and the average score of 6.3 reported by a control group surveyed during the same period as the final focus group.

These patterns suggest that participation in the focus group was associated with higher perceived involvement in clean transportation decision-making, although the sample size was insufficient to formally assess statistical significance.

“Provide more information and budget on how to keep chargers safe and lower vehicle costs.”

—Workshop participant

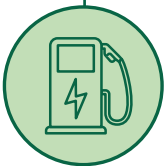
KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Challenge #1: Limited access to clear, reliable information about EVs and charging.

Throughout the workshop series, participants posed many questions about EVs, batteries, purchase incentives, the price of public charging, environmental impact, and more.

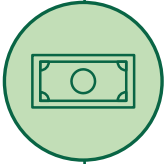
Opportunity #1: Increased collaboration among state and local agencies, researchers, and community-based organizations can support the development of educational resources and outreach activities (such as workshops like those hosted in this project) to provide communities with accurate, timely information on EVs and charging.



Challenge #2: Limited access to working chargers.

Many Pacoima EV drivers do not have access to home charging, and public charging options are limited and hindered by long lines to charge and unreliable—often broken—chargers.

Opportunity #2: 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.



Challenge #3: Affordability.

Participants emphasized concerns with the purchase price of EVs, highlighted the importance of financial resources to enable them to rely on an EV for travel needs, and prioritized the cheapest charging possible over other possible charging advances in a live workshop poll. Additionally, problematic issues were faced by multiple participants when attempting to enroll in existing incentive programs designed for low-income communities, undermining valuable financial support for EV purchase typically offered through these programs.

Opportunity #3: Communities would benefit from more education on incentive program offerings (as well as technical assistance), including upfront grants for EV purchase and fair financing options. This is particularly important given the context of experiences participants had with changing financial terms during the application process for a government-funded EV incentive program, with interest rates diverging from what was originally communicated. Additionally, 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 operations and maintenance. There are also opportunities for community-based organizations to partner with private charge point operators (CPO) to apply for funding to install chargers with affordable pricing.



Challenge #4: Lack of meaningful community involvement in this space.

Pacoima community members shared frustration with government agencies for not adequately incorporating their input in past decision-making processes. Our survey also suggested there has not been sufficient Pacoima resident involvement in clean transportation decision-making thus far, but Pacoima residents believe it is important, with more than 60% of participants from the first workshop rating participation importance as between 8 and 10 on a 10-point scale.

Opportunity #4: 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, most participants who attended the final workshop want to continue to be part of this conversation and effect change in Pacoima and the San Fernando Valley more broadly.

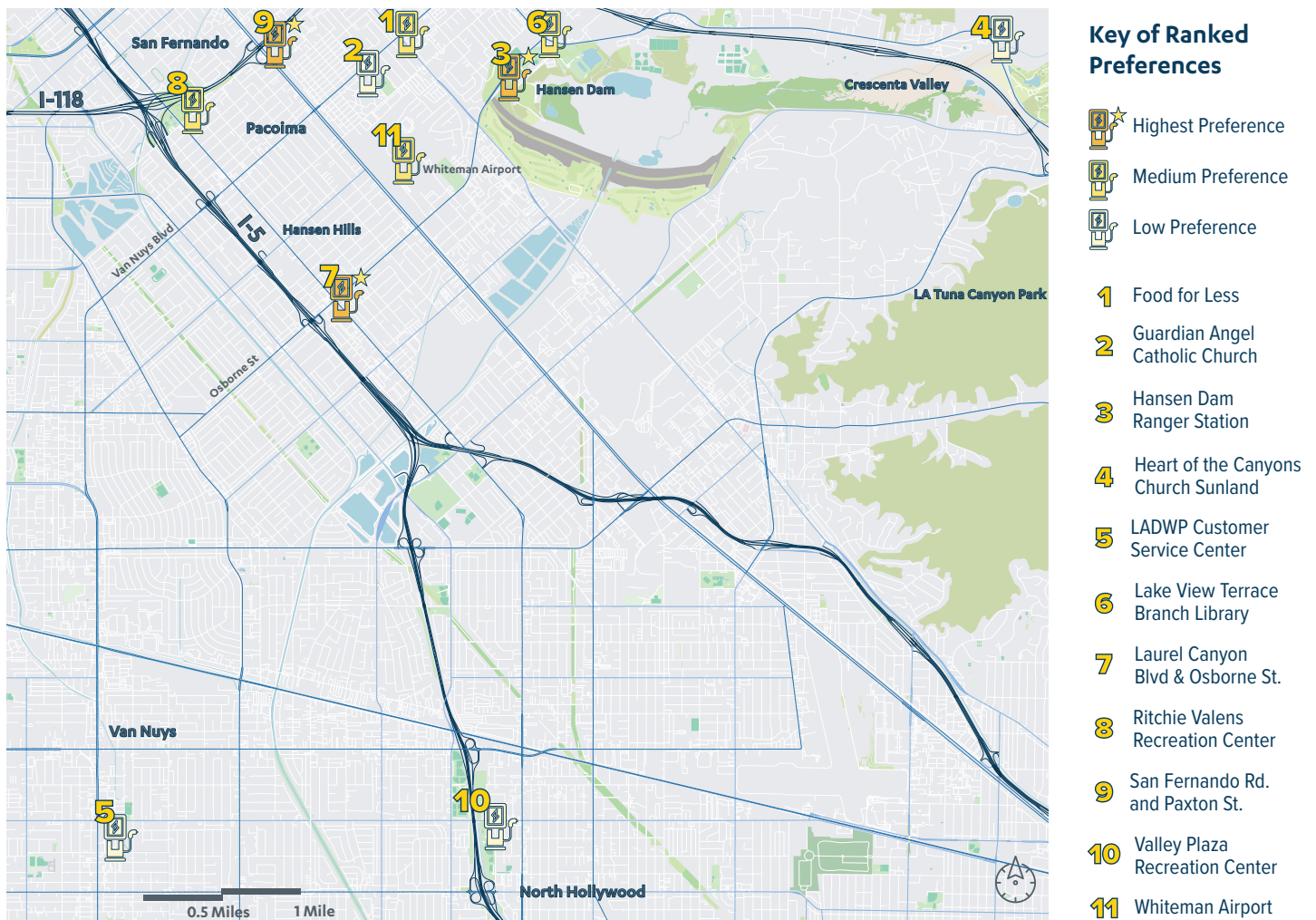
PRIORITIZED CHARGING LOCATIONS

The map in Figure 2 highlights the 11 electric vehicle charging locations that were selected by Pacoima Beautiful (PB), and then voted on by participants. These results came from two live polls conducted at workshops, in partnership with PB, where community

members ranked potential EV charging stations in terms of neighborhood needs. The highest ranked locations, in dark gold, included Hansen Dam Ranger Station and Laurel Canyon Blvd & Osborne St.

FIGURE 2

CA-CLEAN: Pacoima Charging Location Preferences



OVERVIEW OF PATHWAYS FOR MORE CHARGERS

Here is a summary of pathways for more chargers in Pacoima 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 Street Lighting \(BSL\)](#)

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 Pacoima Beautiful, 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 Pacoima Beautiful to identify how our team and other stakeholders can **best support Pacoima 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

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

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AUTHORSHIP

This document was produced by the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation and authored by

- Rachel Connolly, Project Director: rachelconnolly@g.ucla.edu
- Gregory Pierce, Senior Director: gpierce@luskin.ucla.edu
- Connor Castillo, Graduate Student Researcher
- Veronica Padilla, Executive Director, Pacoima Beautiful, vpadilla@pacoimabeautiful.org
- Quyen Vo-Ramirez, Deputy Director, Pacoima Beautiful, qvo-ramirez@pacoimabeautiful.org

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The analysis, views, recommendations, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of any of the project supporters, advisors, interviewees, or reviewers, nor do they represent the University of California, Los Angeles as a whole. Reference to individuals or their affiliations in this report does not necessarily represent their endorsement of the recommendations or conclusions of this report. The author is responsible for the content of this report.

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