

Maine
Cumberland **County**
POSITION PAPER FOR AGENDA ITEM

TO:	Cumberland County Commissioners
FROM:	James H. Gailey, County Manager
DATE:	May 1, 2024
SUBJECT:	Purchase of Electric Vehicles

Requested Action:

Authorize the County Manager to purchase two electric vehicles using US Department of Energy grant funding from Rowe Ford, Westbrook, Maine

Background & Purpose of Request:

The United States Department of Energy announced in 2023 that eligible state, local and Tribal governments could apply for formula funding through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program. The funds are allocated for projects and programs that cut carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency, and reduce energy use.

The Office of State and Community Energy Programs allocated \$79,760 in one-time funds to Cumberland County for eligible projects. The application period was scheduled to close at the end of April, although it was extended to the end of October after Cumberland County completed our application.

Executive staff explored several options for use of the funds, and surveyed staff across departments to determine needs and seek popular requests. Far and away, the most common request from staff was replacing or adding to the Executive Department’s electric vehicle fleet; as the one electric car in operation - a Nissan Leaf - is very small, and losing battery efficiency. It is only considered reliable for transportation in the Greater Portland area.

Executive staff determined that purchasing electric vehicles was the best use of these one-time, limited funds. The grant supports purchase of vehicles that are powered exclusively by electric batteries (BEV) or Plug-In Hybrid gasoline (PHEV). Ideally, the grant would allow us to purchase two vehicles that could serve County operations in much different ways from each other; and staff determined that a versatile pickup truck and long-range sedan would be the best mix, if two such vehicles could be found at or close to the allotted amount.

County staff released a RFP in late winter, which did not yield complete bids. So staff began meeting directly with dealers over the phone and in person, test driving a range of vehicles and negotiating with dealerships.

The result was discovery of a BEV Ford F-150 Lightning pickup truck and a BEV extended range Hyundai IONIQ 5 SE at Rowe Ford/Hyundai in Westbrook. Both vehicles are new; entirely powered by electricity; highly rated; and provide a significant upgrade in utility, safety and range over the Nissan Leaf. Staff's guiding principle in vehicle shopping was that the vehicles should provide a wide diversity of uses, and be able to reliably transport staff as far as Bridgton or Augusta in the middle of winter when battery range is less efficient. Both vehicles easily passed those tests.

Through negotiations with Rowe Ford and the capitalization of Federal and State efficiency rebates, County staff was able to procure both vehicles for a total price of \$80,517; a difference of \$757 from the EECBG allotment. Due to limited available stock for the Ford F-150, both the Chair and Vice Chair authorized staff to move forward with the purchase prior to the Commissioner's vote. The vehicles were delivered on Wednesday, Apr 24, 2024 and staff are in the process of registering and insuring them.

Staff is currently researching charging and storage options for the two vehicles, both in the County garage and at the Northport facility. The average market-rate cost of a hardwired Level-2 electric vehicle charger (which would fully-charge either vehicle overnight) is roughly \$500.

The bulk of the cost of the purchase will come from the \$79,760.00 Department of Energy Block Grant. The remaining purchase price of \$757.00 and \$500.00 for a Phase II charging station will come from the Manager's Strategic Plan Account.

Funding Amount and Source: Department of Energy Block Grant - \$79,760.00
County Strategic Planning Funds - \$1,257.00

Attachments:

