

## Sustainability & Climate Change Reporter

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### Electric Vehicles for Earth Day & Beyond

Good news for anyone thinking about getting an electric vehicle (EV), Nissan has [announced](#) it will resume taking applications for its new [Leaf](#) starting May 1. The on-line reservation system for the Leaf will reopen in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Washington. The company had stopped taking reservations last fall after 20,000 people signed up for the car. The announcement came at the same time that Nissan said, despite production delays including the March earthquake in Japan, it expects to deliver [20,000](#) EVs by September 2011.

Up to now, the Tesla has gotten the most attention by being first on the road, having a racy design and high performance capabilities, but at \$100,000+ the Tesla is out of reach for most people. Many of the newer EVs, such as the Leaf, the Ford [Focus](#), [Coda](#), and the EV/hybrid Chevy [Volt](#), are much more affordable, although at prices in the \$30,000 to \$37,000 range for those cars, "affordable" still is a relative term. A federal \$7500 tax credit helps bring the price down and some states throw in more incentives.

Part of the issue for marketing EVs is the difficulty up to now of being able to see and drive one. The Seattle Electric Vehicle Association put on a great open house this last weekend in Woodinville to showcase EVs and charging technologies for the cars. The flashy Teslas were on display, but the Leaf had to be the real hit as excited new owners took visitors out for a spin and let us get behind the wheel!



Marc Gunther has a blog post "[What's the true cost of an electric car?](#)" that asks the reasonable question of whether heavily subsidized EVs can become competitive. But James Billmaier, founding partner of Charge Northwest, in his book "[Jolt! The Impending Dominance of the Electric Car and Why America Must Take Charge](#)," points out that the subsidies level the playing field. He writes:

Don't forget the taxpayers currently subsidize oil and gas, with 15 percent of our military budget allocated to the protection of global oil production and supply lines. In addition, oil and gas companies receive generous government-funded credits. That said, tax incentives for electric vehicles and the development of their associated ecosystems will only be necessary in the early days of the EV revolution. Once the cars find acceptance, battery costs drop, and the charging infrastructure is up and running, subsidies can and should be eliminated.

While we're still in the early stages of EVs, after years of hearing about "someday," it looks like the future is here.

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