

Tokyo electric vehicle charging infrastructure

As part of a sweeping initiative to rapidly expand its electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and promote zero-emission vehicles, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is set to more than double subsidies for residential EV chargers. This ambitious move aims to transform the city's EV landscape, addressing the growing demand for sustainable transportation options in Japan's capital.

In a groundbreaking step, new apartment towers will be mandated to incorporate EV chargers starting in fiscal 2025, marking Japan's first requirement. The city's goal is to have zero-emission vehicles constitute half of all new vehicle sales by 2030, but progress has been slow due to the limited availability of charging stations. As of the end of fiscal 2021, just 393 chargers had been installed at apartment buildings across Tokyo.

To bridge this gap and facilitate the growth of the EV market, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has unveiled a multi-faceted approach. The key elements of this strategy include substantially increasing charger installation subsidies, requiring new apartments to provide EV chargers, and setting ambitious targets for charging station deployment.

For existing apartment buildings with mechanical parking systems, which tend to be more expensive to equip, the charger installation subsidy will rise to a maximum of 1.71 million yen (\$12,600) starting in fiscal 2023. This represents a significant increase from the previous cap of 810,000 yen across different types of parking areas. Tokyo's government has requested 4 billion yen in funding for these initiatives in its draft budget for fiscal 2023, aiming to have 3,100 chargers installed by fiscal 2024, a 15-fold increase from the estimated tally for fiscal 2022.

Additionally, from fiscal 2025 onward, new apartment buildings will be required to provide EV chargers equal to at least 20% of their parking spaces. This proactive measure aims to ensure that charging infrastructure grows in tandem with the rising demand for electric vehicles.

With approximately 70% of Tokyo's population residing in apartments and housing complexes, the installation of charging points at these locations is deemed essential for the widespread adoption of EVs. Currently, EVs have been slower to gain popularity in Japan compared to regions like the United States and Europe, and EV owners remain a minority in most apartment buildings, making consensus on charger installation a challenge.

To further bolster the EV ecosystem, Japan's national government already covers 50% of the cost of EV chargers, up to 350,000 yen, and 100% of installation expenses, up to 1.35 million yen. Plans to expand this support in fiscal 2023 are being considered, potentially covering all initial installation costs in some cases

when combined with the Tokyo metropolitan subsidies.

In a parallel development, Japanese startup Terra Motors has announced ambitious plans to establish 1,000 fast-charging stations for electric vehicles in Tokyo over the next 18 months. This initiative, which surpasses the number of gas stations in the city, aims to eliminate concerns about EV charging infrastructure.

Terra Motors's fast-charging stations will feature ultrafast 150-kilowatt chargers, offering significant advantages over average fast chargers in Japan. These stations will initially be installed at Kojima's stores, with future expansion into parking lots at post offices, drugstores, and supermarkets. The pricing structure for Terra's stations is still under consideration.

The startup, Terra Motors, plans to tap into a 4 billion yen (\$27 million) investment received from investors, including Osaka Gas and Tokyo Century, to cover these new charging stations' installation and operation costs. According to Terra's founder and Chairman, Toru Tokushige, the project's total cost is expected to exceed 10 billion yen.

Currently, there are 30,287 EV chargers across Japan, including 9,237 fast chargers, as of August 2023. While the Japanese government has set ambitious targets of 300,000 EV chargers and 30,000 fast chargers by 2030, progress has been slowed by the relatively small market for EVs in the country. However, the entry of global automakers like Tesla and BYD into the Japanese market and Terra Motors's ambitious plans could stimulate further adoption of electric vehicles, which currently account for around 2% of Japan's passenger car sales.

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