Next step for electric vehicles in Oregon

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PORTLAND, Ore. â€“ Oregon's governor today announced at an event in Portland that the Oregon Way Advisory Group will meet with state agencies and businesses next week to evaluate a federal competitive grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for electric vehicles and charging stations. Securing the grant dollars and the required financial commitments from the public and private sectors marks the next step toward building a statewide charging station network. The Governor made the announcement as he welcomed another major car manufacturer, this time Mitsubishi, and its electric vehicle to Oregon. â€œCompeting for and winning federal grant dollars will help the state and our partners make zero-emission driving a real choice for Oregonians,â€• Governor Kulongoski said.â€œI am confident that if we remain committed to this effort, it will be another way Oregon has demonstrated that â€˜going greenâ€™ is a win for our economy and our environment.â€• The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes competitive grant dollars under the Clean Cities Program to help states acquire lower- or zero-emission vehicles and the necessary charging stations. The grant dollars available, a total of $300 million, are expected to be highly competitive. No more than 30 grants will be awarded nationwide. The grant also requires a 50 percent match. The Oregon Way Advisory Group will evaluate this grant at their next meeting on April 30th to ensure that Oregonâ€™s application stands out. The stateâ€™s transportation, economic development and energy departments will work to secure dollars to match the federal funds. More than 70 public and private entities from across Oregon have expressed an interest in supporting the transition to electric vehicles. State agencies will ask for firm commitments to purchase electric vehicles or install charging stations. â€œCollectively, state agencies, local governments and private businesses need to send a clear message that Oregon is committed to establishing and growing the electric vehicle market,â€• the Governor said. â€œSecuring these dollars means Oregon will be even more attractive to the car makers that have visited Oregon to market their electric vehicles, one of which is looking to manufacture here. It also means that jobs will be created to install, maintain and possibly manufacture the charging stations.â€• Since creating the Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Workgroup last September and supporting tax credits for the purchase of alternative fuel vehicles, the Governor has attracted several car makers to Oregon. All are looking to Oregon as a test market for electric vehicles. The workgroup is developing a strategy, in coordination with utilities and the private sector, to build a network of electric vehicles charging stations so that Oregon can lead the transition to lower- and zero-emission vehicles. The Governor expects to hear back from the workgroup by the end of this year, with a goal of having the network built over the next 12 months â€“ by the end of 2010. Furthermore, the Governorâ€™s Jobs and Transportation Act that is before the Legislature this session not only represents an injection of $1 billion into the economy to sustain 6,700 jobs annually, but it also represents the largest, most comprehensive and greenest transportation initiative in Oregon history. The proposal includes a provision to create a medium speed electric vehicle designation to encourage the adoption of small neighborhood electric vehicles. Other legislation introduced by the Governor to encourage the entry of electric vehicles into the market includes an up to $5,000 tax credit for the purchase of an electric vehicle and expanding the Business Energy Tax Credit to include the manufacturing of electric vehicles in Oregon. The legislature is currently holding hearings on all of these proposals.