

Race is on to build electric vehicle charging stations

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Electric vehicles are no longer a technology of the future. Californians will be driving the Nissan Leaf and Coda Sedan by the end of the year, and several other automakers have all-electric and plug-in hybrid models in the pipeline.

Now the race is on to build electric vehicle charging stations, where drivers can pull up and plug in their cars.

Several companies, including Coulomb Technologies in Campbell, Better Place in Palo Alto and ClipperCreek in Auburn, see enormous opportunity in the development of electric-vehicle infrastructure.

"Now that the world has decided this is a business, everyone wants in," said Richard Lowenthal, Coulomb's co-founder and CEO, who first drove an electric car when he served as mayor of Cupertino. "We need charging stations. That's our business."

Electric cars currently can travel only a limited number of miles before the batteries need to be recharged, leading to what is known in the industry as "range anxiety." And while most owners are expected to charge their vehicles overnight at home, some apartment dwellers and others may not have that convenience.