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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

First Moscow Parking Lot Equipped With Electric Car Charger

By Anastasia Bazenkova

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The charger was installed in a parking lot located at 20 Ulitsa Bakhrushina near Paveletsky Station as part of the Electrotransport program designed to boost the use of electric vehicles in Moscow.

The first electric car charging point has been installed in a parking lot in Moscow in the latest step by the city's authorities to stimulate an eco-friendly means of transport that has so far proved unpopular with Russians.

The opening of the electric car charger is a first step toward creating a network of chargers for electric vehicles in Moscow, and is a major incentive for drivers to buy an electric car, Dmitry Pronin, deputy head of Moscow's transport department, said at the presentation of the first charging point Tuesday.

See the photo gallery: Moscow's Electric Car Drivers Get Helping Hand With Parking Lot Charger

The charger was installed in a parking lot located at 20 Ulitsa Bakhrushina near Paveletsky Station as part of the Electrotransport program designed to boost the use of electric vehicles in Moscow.

Under the program, state electricity company and distribution grid Rosseti purchases and installs equipment for the charging stations while City Hall allocates plots of land for their location.

In the next three to four months, 50 paid parking lots inside Moscow's Third Ring Road will be equipped with electric car chargers, Roman Berdnikov, first deputy general director for technology at Rosseti, said in a statement Tuesday. By the end of next year, Moscow will have 150 electric car chargers in public parking lots, he said.

Rosseti was already developing a network of charging stations in Moscow together with its subsidiary the Moscow United Electric Grid Company.

The network currently comprises about 30 charging stations installed on Moscow streets, highways and at shopping malls.

Setting up charging points in Moscow parking lots will make them more accessible for drivers, Berdnikov said, adding that until the end of next year, the owners of electric cars in Moscow can charge their vehicles in the public car parks free of charge.

City Hall also offers electric car drivers free parking in Moscow, but despite these measures, electric cars remain an exotic means of transportation in Russia.

Only about 500 electric cars have been sold in Russia in total since 2011, when the first electric vehicles entered the market, according to Andrei Toptun, head of analysis at the Autostat car market research agency.

And the already tiny market for electric cars is currently showing a decline.

In the first half of the year, fewer than 50 electric cars were bought, down 25 percent compared to the same period last year, according to Autostat.

Two of the main obstacles to the growth of the electric car market in Russia are the relatively high price of the vehicles and the additional challenge to them presented by Russia's harsh weather conditions.

Despite disappointing statistics, some industry representatives are convinced the market has potential.

"We are absolutely positive that electric cars are the future," Tigran Khudaverdyan, head of Yandex.Taxi, the taxi app of Russia's major Internet company Yandex, said at the presentation.

The development of eco-friendly transport in Moscow is hampered by a lack of infrastructure, he said, expressing hope that the installation of electric charging points will improve the situation.

Yandex.Taxi's vehicle pool currently includes two Tesla electric cars that the company purchased in July, said Khudaverdyan.

According to Rosseti's Berdnikov, the network of charging points will expand to 10 Russian regions, with 1,000 chargers by the end of 2018.

Chargers are also set to appear at gas stations around the country in the near future, after Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree in August ordering all gas stations in Russia to install them by Nov. 1, 2016.

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