

BUYING A USED CAR CAN BE ELECTRIFYING

By Kenneth E. Seaton



WHILE THE COSTS OF TRADITIONAL NEW GAS-GUZZLERS KEEP CLIMBING, SAVVY

DRIVERS LOOKING TO SAVE A FEW BUCKS ARE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THE BENEFITS FOUND IN SECOND-HAND EVS.

So the time has come and you have finally decided to take the plunge and replace your old jalopy. With so many interesting choices before you it could be a hard decision. What manufacture and type of vehicle are best for you? Do you buy new or used; gas, diesel, hybrid or

electric? Or, maybe you may want to consider looking into a pre-owned electric vehicle (EV).

There are many car purchasers who prefer to and will only buy a used vehicle. That's because they really hate the thought of paying for those infuriating extra initial charges that are usually added on to a new vehicle. And...who likes getting nailed with lowered depreciation values the minute that your new car rolls off the dealership lot?

GO GREEN OR DON'T GO

Some conventional car owners are also growing tired of hearing the ding of gas prices going up. Other drivers are concerned about air pollution and the environment. Since electric vehicles don't consume gasoline or directly yield greenhouse gas emissions, there has been growing government support for their development, production and sales. Addi-

tionally, some provinces are now offering financial enticements and tax incentives to tempt drivers into purchasing an electric vehicle.

Now right off the lot, EVs may appear to be thousands of dollars more costly than their internal-combustion equivalents. With time however, EVs should prove to be less costly to operate. They are much simpler mechanically than internal-combustion vehicles, have far fewer parts and require less costly maintenance. Most of the EVs perceived high cost resides with its battery. As manufacturing expands, production costs drop and battery production increases, then overall EV costs will fall.

Overall, it appears that purchasing a new EV is a great idea and more people are doing it. One way that this should potentially interest any future used-car purchasers is that; statistics show that typically around seven percent of new car

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purchasers experience buyer's remorse during the first months after their purchase. This means that within a very short period of time there will be any number of low-mileage, low-usage and well maintained used electric vehicles just waiting to be purchased.

If you think that a pre-owned electric car is beyond your financial reach, then perhaps it's time for a rethink. As more and more EVs hit the road and thanks to supply and demand, there are more reasonably-priced and excellent-quality used models entering the market. New car dealerships should be offering deals on EVs that have been returned from two-and-three-year manufacturer-subsidized leases, which should translate into some great deals on these ready-to-go used electric vehicles.

POWERING UP AND STAYING POWERED

Since they first hit the road, a major concern with buying EVs has always been battery life and range. These uncertainties have not proven to be as serious an issue as first predicted. But learning when-and-how often the car was being charged and to what level it was being recharged – much like learning how to keep your cell phone optimally charged – has had an impact on battery usage and longevity. This has proven to be a learning chore for some new electric vehicle owners.

And like your cell phone, any EV is only as good as its battery. So insuring that the used vehicle that you are interested in has a strong healthy battery is essential. Most manufactures have guaranteed their batteries for about eight-to-10 years. Finding out when the battery was first installed should be a must-do on your buying checklist.

Conversely, there are some potential buyers out there who feel that buying a car with a weak or depleted battery is not as big an issue as it might seem. They believe that the cost of replacing the battery with a new – or- better battery may get them an even better deal on the asking price of the EV.

In-fact these same savvy buyers feel that the savings anticipated in running an electric vehicle will more than compensate for the initial outlay expense of purchasing a new battery. If you combine the money not paid out in sky rocketing gasoline costs with the savings garnered in the low day-to-day parts and maintenance costs of driving an EV, then it is a win-win-win deal for car owners.

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Fax: 902-527-2004
Email: info@marktechauto.com



BABY IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

According to Statistics Canada, the average Canadian commutes 30 kilometres to work on a daily basis. Subsequently, if in extreme cold-weather an EV's range drops down to around 76 kilometres – from around 105 kilometres in normal wintery driving – then commuting drivers will have more than enough juice to be able to get from here-to- there and back again.

Usually, cars purchased from individuals will cost less than those purchased from dealerships. One reason for this is that for dealerships' used-car sales are often more profitable than those of new cars. However, as always, when purchasing something that has been pre-owned; the Buyer Beware mantra should be kept in mind and you need to perform due diligence before driving away with a new used vehicle.

Another choice available to would-be buyers is to take a look at a certified pre-

owned vehicle. Dealerships put certain cars through a comprehensive special inspection process, applying manufacturer-set standards. Certified pre-owned vehicles can arrive at the dealership from vehicle auctions, trade-ins and lease programs.

For some, certified pre-owned used cars may offer more peace of mind when buying a pre-owned vehicle. Another potential selling point is that due to these vehicles' excellent condition, vehicle financing may be easier to obtain. Most vehicles come with a warranty that has been extended beyond the initial coverage of the new auto purchase and are accepted by the original vehicle manufacturer.

For those buyers who are interested in buying a used EV but have never driven one before, you might want to consider renting one first. A quick check on the Internet will help you determine which local car rental outlets carry EVs. Try driving one for a weekend to see if you and an

electric vehicle are the right fit for each other.

The province of Nova Scotia is currently researching options for its public recharging infrastructure and off-peak charging for electric vehicles. They will be conducting an assessment of the viability of integrating electric vehicles into the electricity grid. The Halifax Bloggers website notes that there are currently 45 charging stations located around Nova Scotia that offer electric cars places to recharge. All but one are level 2 – slow – stations that take approximately 4-6 hours for a full charge.

AND FINALLY...

If your reason for buying a used EV is strictly monetary than be sure to take the time to do a little research. Be sure to see if there are any vehicle rebates, federal or provincial tax credits available in your area for purchasing an EV. Also check out the financial benefit, if any, for going the pre-owned route over new.

Currently there are many out there who view electric cars and their owners with a jaundiced eye. For some, EVs are only a passing fad which is expected to fizzle out. But if the costs of operating a traditional gas guzzler keep climbing and EV owners costs keep going down, then who will be eyeing who?

KEY CHECKLIST POINTS WHEN BUYING A USED EV IN A PRIVATE SALE

Research the car before you buy it. Go online and look up reviews for the vehicle. You may want to order a vehicle history report from a reputable company. i.e. CarProof, ICBC, etc.

Be sure to ask the seller why they are selling the car and if the vehicle has had regular oil changes and maintenance done. If they say that they have receipts and service records, request to see them.

Closely inspect the car's condition and be sure to check what's on the odometer. Find out if anything on the car has ever been replaced or upgraded.

Ask to see the seller's ID and then confirm that they are indeed the legal owner of the vehicle. Also verify that the registration information matches with the Vehicle Identification Number or VIN.

Inquire if you can take the car for an independent inspection by a qualified EV mechanic. If they say no then this should be a deal breaker as it may save you much money and aggravation later.

Find out if there is any of the original manufacturer's warranty left on the vehicle. If there is, then ask if the manufacture allows for warranties to be transferred. 🚗



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