

GOP bill would add electric vehicle charging stations, encourage renewable energy use

Posted on Tuesday, Apr 23, 2019

Assembly Republicans are looking to add electric vehicle charging stations along freeways and help cover the cost of homeowners' bills if they buy renewable energy.

The proposals are two of five pieces of an environmental package GOP Rep. Adam Neylon unveiled at a Capitol news conference Monday, which fell on Earth Day.

Neylon, R-Pewaukee, said the bills would help improve Wisconsin's environment while protecting the state's heritage and upping citizens' quality of life.

Gov. Tony Evers in his budget has already proposed spending on grants for electric car charging stations.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

In all, the funding for the plan — which also includes distributing worker training grants for those who install renewable energy systems and bringing awareness to residents about electronics recycling opportunities — would come from existing revenue sources, Neylon said.

Under the renewable energy plan, Neylon said all energy providers and utilities would have to offer customers the option of purchasing renewable energy. Consumers could choose to have 25 percent, 50 percent, 75 percent or 100 percent of their energy come from renewable sources. The state would then offset that cost by covering 50 percent of the higher rate, he said.

The funding would come from the state's Focus on Energy program, Neylon said. He

expects it would cost between \$7 million and \$8 million per year.

“One of the major obstacles to people using renewable energy is the high upfront cost,” he said.

Meanwhile, under the electric vehicle charging station expansion, Neylon said the state would give grants to businesses to install the stations near freeways, likely starting along I-94. While he ideally would like to see every interstate in Wisconsin covered with the privately owned and maintained stations coming every 65 to 70 miles, he said it depends how much funding is made available.

Neylon expects it would cost \$10 million to cover every interstate in Wisconsin. That funding would come from the Volkswagen settlement agreement under the plan.

Evers in his budget called for allowing the Department of Administration to spend the remaining settlement dollars on grants for public transit vehicles and electric car charging stations, though the plan doesn't provide details.

But Neylon said the \$20 million in remaining funds should be enough to cover both Evers' and Assembly Republicans' plans.

“I think you can still get both of those objectives met, where he can still get his amount for upgrading the buses and we can do our amount for the EV charging stations, so I think those plans can work together,” he said. “If the bus money takes a little bit more, we're willing to draw down some of the spending at first.”

Evers spokeswoman Britt Cudaback called the announcement “a missed opportunity” for bipartisanship.

“If Republicans are finally ready to get serious about protecting our environment despite eight years of failing to conserve our natural resources, repealing environmental protections, cutting the Stewardship Fund, and disinvesting in the DNR, then the governor looks forward to having Republican support for his budget,” she said.

The package also includes:

*A plan to use funding from the state's Fast Forward Worker Training program for grants to employers who provide education and training in solar and wind energy systems. Both schools and businesses would be able to apply for funding, Neylon

said.

*A proposed extension of the Knowles-Nelson stewardship program through the length of the budget. The program, which is used to purchase lands for public use, is currently set to expire in 2020. Evers in his budget also proposed extending it over the next two fiscal years, though it's traditionally been funded on a 10-year cycle.

Neylon said the GOP plan wouldn't make any changes to the existing program.

*And a bill to expand and bring awareness to opportunities across the state to recycle electronics. Neylon said the state would partner with counties and others offering the services in order to draw attention to the programs.

But he said lawmakers are "still working through details on what the right amount" of funding for the plan.

"We're present this as we're affirming our commitment to protecting and growing these programs," he said.

Hear the audio:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/190422Neylon.mp3>