

Electric Vehicles 2, Ownership

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By Thomas Beck, AIA, NCARB

We have written about electric vehicles (EVs) here before, and now we can say that we are owners. Last week we received our Volkswagen ID4 Pro AWD Electric SUV (<https://www.vw.com/en/models/id-4.html>). We thought the process might be of interest to readers. Given the availability of substantial tax incentives, the fact we have equipped our home with enough solar panels to easily support charging the vehicle, and the growing infrastructure of charging options to make extended road trips a reality our timing is good.

We are a two-vehicle family for the foreseeable future. Part of our strategy has been to keep one existing gas vehicle to take longer road trips, and use the EV for the bulk of our local driving. Thomas did extensive research on our options. Some family members had experienced a very lengthy wait for their Tesla, which they finally received recently just under a year from making the deposit. Our own refundable deposit to VW was made 7 months ago. Supply chain issues, including parts manufactured in Ukraine, contributed to the VW delays.

Our Tesla buying brother-in-law provided some insight into their experience. The “Pros” included convenience of buying through the internet, the car “totally fun” and advanced technologically, with the note that he is not sure if it is more advanced than others on the market right now. He says the charging station at home is more advanced than others, as well as the Super Charging Stations. The car is less expensive to operate and has much less maintenance than Internal Combustion Engines (ICE). The vehicle will have less brake wear due to regenerative braking. (<https://www.kbb.com/car-advice/regenerative-brakes-how-they-work/>) The “Cons” that he listed included “Less than ideal communication from and with Tesla”; The wait time of 11.25 months; he has heard that EVs “eat tires” but had no data for that yet. He says overall he would still buy it again, but with his eyes open a bit more.

When we were notified recently that our vehicle on order might possibly deliver next year, we picked up the phone and benefited from the human touch. Bob Flaherty at Ed Carroll Motor Company in Fort Collins made it very easy for us to get our vehicle, and he gave us outstanding help in both the decision-making phase and understanding the EV once we received it. Bob is a former teacher and high school principal, and that background contributed to his expertise in helping us make the best choice for our needs. Our car is technically still being manufactured, but another, identically equipped EV became available, making it possible for us to purchase and get the \$7500 tax rebate. VW is also offering three years of access to free charging (on a specific network of chargers) as a result of the settlement of allegations that VW violated the Clean Air Act. The settlement includes the requirement that VW invest \$2 billion in Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) charging infrastructure and the promotion of ZEVs.

(<https://www.epa.gov/enforcement/volkswagen-clean-air-act-civil-settlement>) To put this in perspective, if we drive 15,000 miles per year, with a gas vehicle that gets 26 miles per gallon, that’s about \$6,000 worth of gas over three years at \$3.50 per gallon.

While we were taking care of the paperwork at the dealer, we were given a tour of the apps which help us find chargers that are covered under our VW free access, and another that will be helpful in planning trips and seeing all of the available chargers. The first, the Electrify America app, shows us the chargers available on our 3-year charging plan, and also how many of those chargers are in use. The only one within 200 miles of us that showed “all chargers in

use” was a grocery store in Glendale. The closest that are free to us for the next 3 years were in Longmont, Loveland and Boulder. Since we have a home charger this is not a problem.

The other app we downloaded to our Androids was PlugShare, which shows us all of the available chargers. We can plan a trip, find the high-speed chargers, the slower chargers, and see which locations are unavailable due to maintenance.

The EPA has an interesting page disputing many of the myths that surround EVs. (<https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/electric-vehicle-myths>) Because our home electricity is 100% solar, the effect of switching one of our vehicles to an EV will have a substantial impact on how much our driving is contributing to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

As of this writing we have been owners for less than a week. The ID4 has many features we’ll be learning about. The navigation of the large touch screen display is fairly intuitive. Some automatic features, like staying between the lines, can be disabled, which is a plus on roads where bicycles may be close to those lines. It sounds like our family is pleased with their Tesla, and we are all glad to be depending less on fossil fuels. These EVs will save us money in operational costs, maintenance, and help us reduce our carbon footprint.

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