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RIDE AND DRIVE EXPO SHOWCASES LATEST IN EV MARKET

Unitil, Clean Energy NH join forces to give consumers firsthand experience

June 8, 2022 - Unitil Corporation, (Unitil.com), a provider of natural gas and electricity to customers in New England, teamed up with Clean Energy NH for an electric vehicle Ride and Drive Expo last weekend that attracted dozens of EV enthusiasts and put some curiosity seekers behind the wheel for the first time.

The free event held on June 4 at Unitil's electric operations facility in Exeter was a unique opportunity for consumers to experience various makes and models of electric vehicles, learn more about the latest innovations in the EV industry, and even check out a range of electric bikes and scooters as well.

Unitil hosted the expo with Clean Energy NH, which manages Drive Electric NH - a coalition of public and private stakeholders that aims to raise awareness of the benefits of electric vehicles and the need to support charging infrastructure in New Hampshire.

Dealerships with vehicles on display - some of which were available for test drives - included Seacoast Volkswagen, McFarland Ford, Volvo Cars of Exeter and BMW of Stratham. EZ Electric Bikes & Scooters of Exeter, Revision Energy and Granite State Clean Cities Coalition also participated along with several owners who brought their personal electric vehicles and a Zero electric motorcycle for visitors to see first-hand.

Unitil's new hybrid electric bucket truck, which uses a rechargeable battery to power the boom, and a hybrid pickup truck were also on display.

"As interest in the EV market continues to grow, we felt this would be the perfect opportunity for new consumers to get their questions answered. Putting them in the driver's seat and offering a chance to inspect them up close and test drive a vehicle like a Tesla was a great hands-on experience," said Alec O'Meara, media relations manager at Unitil.

Joshua Singer, Clean Energy NH's program coordinator, said many of those in attendance asked a variety of questions ranging from rebates to purchasing an electric vehicle and charging it up.

The turnout was greater than Singer has seen at some other similar expos. "I think the interest is high. Gas prices are also high, but there are more options than there have ever been. Every couple of months there's a new car that comes out," he said.

Oliver Strattner, a sales expert with Volvo Cars of Exeter, spent the day educating potential consumers about the dealership's two electric vehicles on display - a C40 Recharge crossover and an XC40 Recharge SUV.

Strattner said rising gas prices have prompted many consumers to begin looking at hybrids and all-electric vehicles.

"In the last year or so the interest in the plug-ins and EVs has doubled if not tripled. We just want to open some eyes and ears and try to get people excited about everything we have to offer and everything that's coming for the future," he said. "A lot of people are curious about overall vehicle range, charge times and how driving an electric vehicle changes their daily habits. A lot of times people will do a lot of short trips that the vehicles are more than

6 Liberty Lane West
Hampton, New Hampshire 03842
unitil.com
Ph: 603-772-0775 Fax: 603-773-6605



capable of handling without needing a charge, but people are curious about when they're driving somewhere that exceeds the vehicle range, how that affects the trip and where they'll be able to stop."

Durham resident Scott Sebastian and his wife were among the new consumers who stopped by as they're currently looking to purchase an electric vehicle.

"We're going to replace her vehicle with electric. We anticipate doing a lot of commuting between jobs and a child going to school, so it just makes sense, especially with gas prices near \$5," he said. "We're seriously looking, but it's just a question of inventory."

The Ride and Drive event was a first for John Carty, a resident of Portsmouth who serves on the city's sustainability commission and is also a member of Clean Energy NH. He has a Rivian electric vehicle on order, which he hopes to get this summer, and spent some time chatting with an owner who brought his own Rivian R1T pickup truck to the event. Carty said his wife already drives a plug-in hybrid vehicle and his son-in-law has a Tesla.

"We do have some EVs in the family, so I'll be next," said Carty, adding that he also hoped to learn more about how homeowners, municipalities and utilities can work together to make cleaner energy more available.

Others who attended weren't necessarily in the market for an electric vehicle, but were simply curious.

"We just always wanted to try one. We've heard so much about it," said Hampton resident Karen Oliveri-Schneck, who took a Tesla for a spin and was amazed by the quietness and other controls.

While many came to learn about electric vehicles, others had their eyes on the electric bikes and scooters displayed by EZ Electric Bikes & Scooters of Exeter.

"Electric scooters are relatively new, but electric bikes have really gained popularity since COVID. They've really taken off," said Teresa Hemenway, co-owner of EZ Electric Bikes & Scooters.

The business began selling electric bikes in 2019 and saw sales go "through the roof" once the pandemic hit, Hemenway said, adding, "People are now coming by after they heard about electric bikes and they're very interested to find out what they're about."

About Unitil Corporation

Unitil Corporation provides energy for life by safely and reliably delivering natural gas and electricity in New England. We are committed to the communities we serve and to developing people, business practices and technologies that lead to dependable, more efficient energy. Unitil Corporation is a public utility holding company with operations in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Together, Unitil's operating utilities serve approximately 107,100 electric customers and 85,600 natural gas customers. For more information about our people, technologies and community involvement please visit unitil.com.

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For more information please contact:

Alec O'Meara
Media Relations Manager
Unitil Service Corporation
omeara@unitil.com
Phone (603) 773-6404
Cell: (603) 998-9095