

## New solar-powered car-charging stations unveiled in Robinson

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Darrell Sapp/Post-Gazette

One of four free "EV" Charging Stations at the Mall at Robinson, powered by a collection of solar panels on the roof at the mall, which is owned by Forest City Enterprises. The stations take up to two hours to give a full charge to an electric vehicle.



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Steve Ferguson, with North Star Chevrolet, charges a 2014 Chevy Volt with one of the four plug-ins at the charging station

By Madasyn Czebiniak / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

In the parking lot outside the food court at the Mall at Robinson, a silver Chevy Volt sat in a space painted with a green and white electric vehicle decal, waiting for a jolt. Inside, representatives from Eaton and Wesco gathered by a gray kiosk that monitors the amount of energy being generated by the new 8 kilowatt solar panels on top of the mall.

By 11 a.m. the panels had generated 4.11 kw of energy, enough to power 46 laptops. They also generated enough power to give an electric car a full charge in two hours. That's a perk for hybrid drivers because the mall's newest car charging stations are connected to the panels.

The charging stations were officially unveiled at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday, but they have been operational since June. Beth Edwards, the mall's general manager, said she has been surprised by the response.

"I've seen several cars using it. We actually had a mall walker who went out and bought an electric car so they could charge it when they're walking in the mall," she said.

There are 270 public electric car-charging stations in Pennsylvania and more than 8,000 such stations in the United States, according to data from the Alternative Fuels Data Center. The mall's charging stations are not the first of their kind in the region but they are the first that operate completely off of solar energy, according to David Jason, co-owner of Green Roads Energy, a Mt. Lebanon business that assisted with the project and also sells solar devices.

"It's kind of cutting edge technology. No one else is doing this," Mr. Jason said.

It's unclear how many solar-electric car charging stations are in operation in the U.S. but research shows some are operational in other states.

The charging stations are the latest addition to the sustainable efforts the mall has undertaken over the past nine years. They are free to the public and the mall is also offering a chance to win prizes for any guests who use them more than 10 times.

"What the Mall at Robinson is doing here today, this is something we can all be proud of," county executive Rich Fitzgerald said. "When we think about energy and sustainability, we want to be the energy capital of the world but we want to do it with everything. Not just with coal and gas but with solar and wind and geothermal and sustainability."

The chargers were donated by Eaton, a power management company with operations in Moon, and Wesco, a South Side-based distribution company.

Green Roads Energy and its partner, Day and Night Solar, assisted in the solar aspects of the project. Day and Night Solar, based in Collinsville, Ill., makes solar photovoltaic components.

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