

Well-Attended Press Conference Shows Support For EV Direct Sales

Headline photo courtesy of Will Cross

Post by Barry Kresch

Grassroots Momentum for the EV Freedom Bill

The atmosphere was *electric* as about 100 EV enthusiasts came to Westport from all over the state for a press conference supporting The EV Freedom Bill, legislative bill number SB 127. Lame puns aside, I have been part of this EV Club for 9 years, and this issue feels like it has been around for most of them, but today felt different. The grassroots energy was palpable in a way that it hadn't been in the past. Perhaps it is due to Tesla registrations having grown to almost 6,000 in the state. Or the excitement of new, really cool, EV companies entering the market also looking to sell direct. Or energized engagement on the political front.

This bill, which in earlier guises had come to be referred to as the "Tesla Bill," would permit EV-exclusive manufacturers that do not have an existing franchise dealer network to open stores in CT. At today's event, Tesla was joined by Rivian and Lucid. Others are expected to adopt this business model or, more to the point, this or some other new model not envisaged in the existing dealer franchise laws that were written almost 100 years ago.

The bill also requires that companies opening stores have a sustainable model for servicing vehicles that are sold here.

The Way Forward In A Changing World

Passing this bill would be a tangible step toward supporting innovation. The industry is changing. Fissures are showing in the traditional automobile business, despite their actions to forestall competition by keeping new EV companies out of the state. 17% of Cadillac dealers opted to drop the franchise rather than embrace GM's making this its centerpiece EV brand. Volvo announced an aggressive timeline of moving to an all-electric lineup by 2030 and moving EV sales online in the short-term. We don't know the fine print of how this changes the relationship between the dealers and the manufacturer. If sales are online, do the dealers ever take title to the vehicle? And if they don't, are they still a dealer? We reached out to Volvo for elucidation but have not received a response. We are guardedly optimistic that these changes are signs of a more serious effort to sell EVs.

SB 127 was introduced by Sen. Will Haskell, who organized the press conference, and Rep. Jonathan Steinberg, both of whom represent local districts. There were a number of other state and local officials present. This was the speaker order lineup:

- Senator Will Haskell (SB 127 co-sponsor)
- Barry Kresch, President of the EV Club of CT
- Rep. Jonathan Steinberg (SB 127 co-sponsor)
- Jim Marpe – Westport First Selectman
- Jeff Curry – Lucid Motors
- Kaitlin Monaghan – Rivian
- Lori Brown – League of Conservation Voters
- Daniel McInerney – International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
- Senator Bob Duff – Majority Leader
- Former Senator Art Linares

Paul Braren has posted video of all of the speakers on his [blog](#).

Journalist David Pogue recorded remarks that were played to the group. A schedule conflict prevented him from appearing in person but you can hear what he had to say. (His remarks are just short of 4 minutes.)

<https://evclubct.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Pogue-Com.mp3>

The presentations took place at the Westport Train Station in front of a depot building with a solar array that powers the building and 4 adjacent EV charging stations. These were the first solar-powered public chargers in the state. They were installed in 2012, which is when I met the club founder, Leo Cirino, and became a member.



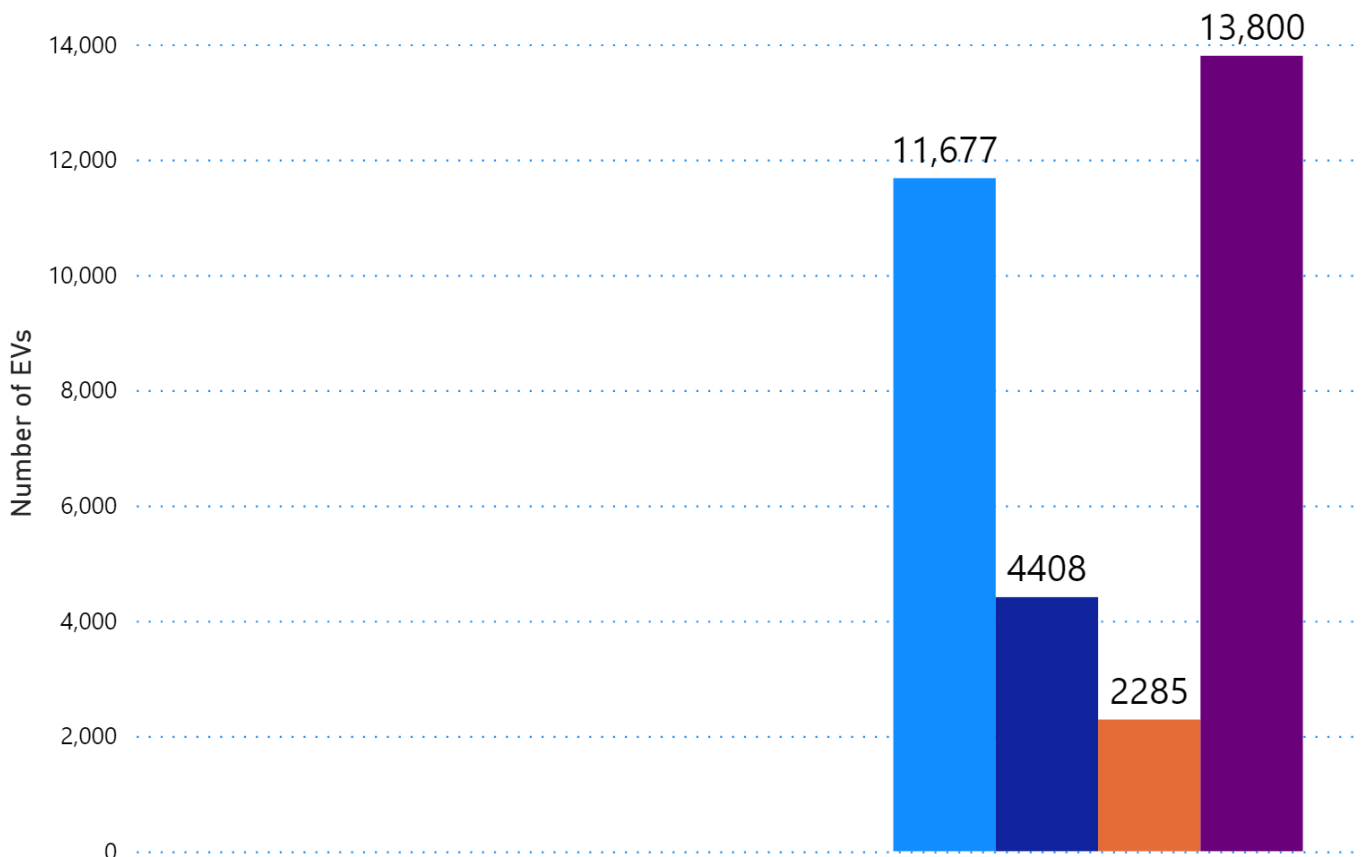
Model Y and Lucid Air – charging stations are to the right of the building by the white Chevy Volt

Long Way To Go

In his remarks, Sen. Haskell noted that the state had a long way to go to reach its goal of 500,000 EVs in the fleet by 2030. I've written a lot about that and noted that given where we are today, 13,800 EVs, it will be necessary to maintain a 49% compound annual growth rate to get there. This may sound high, and it is, but it is actually worse than it sounds because this figure is growth in net registrations. Each year, there are new vehicles added to the file, but there is also turnover from vehicles leaving the file. In 2020, the turnover was the equivalent of 52% of the vehicles that were new to the file. So from an acquisition perspective, it means we need to double each year. Without SB 127, we'll never get there.

Turnover Analysis for 2020

● Jan 2020 EVs ● New EVs All 2020 ● Turnover Jan 21/20 ● Jan 2021 EVs



There are many that we need to thank for a successful event including members of the EV Club and the Tesla Owners Club,

not only for coming, but also for reaching out to our legislators; the public officials who support this bill; the IBEW; and Tesla, Rivian, and Lucid.

As encouraging as it was to see this level of support, it's not over. The bill will be called for a committee vote on Wednesday. If it passes, then it goes before the full chamber. It feels like we're only to the quarter-finals. We will update this space as we move up the brackets.



Tesla Model X in chrome wrap. Model Y on the right.



Lucid Air Interior, Who are those masked men – Barry Kresch and Bruce Becker getting set for the presser, Senator Haskell speaking about the bill (Majority Leader Duff in the background)

One final note: We have been asking people to tell their legislators they support this bill. That doesn't stop with the press conference or even the committee vote. It is important they hear from you. Tesla has set up an ["engage"](#) page for CT that enables a 1-click message or the opportunity to customize it for yourself. You may have to set up an account. You don't need to be a Tesla owner to do that.