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Poll: Solar-charging

What is the most enticing reason to solar-charge a car?

- fueling independence
- true zero emissions driving
- reduce global warming
- it makes economic sense
- other

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Preaching PV + EV in solar heaven: Arizona

Sunday, 20 February 2011 14:35 | Written by Christof Demont-Heinrich, SCD.Com Editor | [Print](#) [Email](#)

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Paul Moore poses next to a Ford Ranger Electric which is partially powered by a solar array on his Phoenix, Ariz. area home. [Photo Courtesy of Paul Moore]

Can one person persuade America – and the world -- that solar-charged driving is the future? Probably not. But if there's someone who could come close, it's Paul Moore.

Articulate, funny, able to tell good stories, and, most importantly, someone you can connect with on a personal level, whether you're a left-leaning greenie or a right-leaning energy independence guy, Moore has energetically taken up the mantle of EV + solar PV education and promotion in his corner of the world, which just so happens to be one of the best places on earth for solar: Arizona.

In fact, since plugging into solar-charged driving himself about two years ago – he's got an electric Ford Ranger and an 6 kW solar system -- Moore has worked with the company that installed his home solar system, [American Solar Electric](#), to actively promote the solar + electric car synergy. All told, he's delivered his EV + PV story to crowds of 50 people or more at nearly a dozen solar informational meetings in the Phoenix, Ariz. area.

The software business developer, doesn't convert everyone at those meetings to solar-charged driving. But he definitely pulls in more than a few with his EV + PV story and, of course, with his storytelling talents and engaging personality.

Seeing the EV + PV light

And, when Moore gets someone to see the EV + PV light, he really does get them.

"When you tell people this story, that you, on your own, can drive a vehicle and not suffer any of the guilt, not buy any oil from OPEC, that there's no pollution, it's almost as if they're having a religious experience," explains Moore. "They say, 'Oh my god, this is possible?! I can do this now?! It's a blast to watch.'"

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Using solar-electricity to fuel the U.S. transportation fleet will save oil for more important things -- like agriculture, says Paul Moore.

Moore's not just talking about electric car geeks here. He's talking about everyone, including many hard-core gas car junkies.

"I've converted a lot of piston heads," says the Arizonan with a laugh. "People who have always driven an ICE (internal combustion engine) think electric cars are stupid. But there's no arguing with what I do, because it works. It doesn't take much more than me telling my story, letting them drive my electric truck, and me showing them a picture of a Tesla. It's pretty much over after that."

A solar and EV love story

Moore's own love story with solar and with electric cars has a much longer history than that of some of his converts. He became interested in both in the 1970s. An curiosity about power delivery and the electric grid along with an environmental geology professor whose class he took at Southern Methodist University (SMU) helped jump start what would eventually turn out to be a personal EV + PV story for Moore.

"There were a few classes taught about the grid at SMU, and I took them all," explains Moore. "One of my professors was very interested in solar and alternative methods of generating power – I think that's where I probably got started."

While Moore's been interested in both solar and electric cars for a long time, it is only relatively recently – within the past few years -- that he's really made the connection between the two.

A friendly debate with a friend at a barbecue about global warming – with Moore taking the position of a moderate skeptic – inspired Moore to take a closer look at his own CO2 production. He did the calculations and realized that his family's two cars were contributing about 13 tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere every year, as well as other pollutants such as carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and particulates.

At the time, Moore was already invested in improving the energy efficiency of his family's home – he has two children, 9 and 11 -- and was focused on reducing the family's water consumption.

The electric grid: A 'cistern' for electrons

He was considering the pros and cons of building a water cistern for his home when he had an epiphany: "I realized that the cistern for electrons was the grid."

This country is built around the automobile. I'm not going to change the country. I just want to change what makes the auto go.
 -- Paul Moore, *DrivingOnSunshine.Com* founder

After getting the okay from his wife, Moore quickly moved to buy an electric car, a 1998 Ford Electric Ranger. He added a home solar system not long after that.

And, at that point, he was driving on sunshine.

Of course, some critics say you're not really driving on sunshine if you're charging an EV at night while your home PV system is generating electricity during the day – and Moore tends to charge his EV at night. However, he has little sympathy for this view.

"The electron is fungible, like a dollar bill," he says. "If you put in 3,000 kWh in a year and you take that out in a year, you're at net zero."

DrivingOnSunshine.Com

Having seen the light on EV + PV and having acted on it, Moore has since dedicated himself to spreading the word about solar-charged driving and Driving On Sunshine.

He's started a web site, DrivingOnSunshine.Com, which promotes the environmental economic, and energy independence advantages of solar-charged driving.

DrivingOnSunshine.Com also helps interested solar-charged drivers figure out the specific math involved in their own potential EV + PV situation.

Moore's big on emphasizing that solar-charged driving isn't just about helping the environment, but is also a great way to achieve national and individual energy independence.

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charges EV and/or home

"I ain't gonna ride a bus," Moore says with a laugh. "This country is built around the automobile. I'm not going to change the country. I just want to change what makes the auto go.



Paul Moore's web site, DrivingOnSunshine.Com, helps people crunch the numbers behind their own personal EV+PV situation. [Graphics Credit: DrivingOnSunshine.Com]



Home solar production falls with shorter days

"There's nothing wrong with the internal combustion engine, that's where I start," adds Moore. "We got to where we are because of this device. Our goods are delivered because of it. I'm not here to blow up the ICE. But there's better way to get around town than oil. Oil is too valuable for so much of it to be going to transportation."

Solar, EV guys 'speak a different language'

In addition to starting DrivingOnSunshine.Com, Moore has also worked to persuade his solar installation company, American Solar Electric, to actively promote EV + PV. And he's regularly doing the lecture circuit with American Solar Electric as well.

"What I've found is that solar guys speak a different language from EV guys," Moore says of the active effort it took to persuade American Solar to itself actively promote EV + PV. "They're from two different paradigms. I took these two disciplines – solar and electric cars – and put them together. As simple as that sounds, it's not something many people have thought about."

In addition, Moore's worked with his kids' school to get a solar system installed on the school's roof, which has helped give students a new educational window on solar.

Most recently, Moore's succeeded in officially trademarked Driving On Sunshine®. His aim is not to make money off the phrase, he says, but rather to build a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting EV + PV around the catchy slogan.

"The whole idea is to teach people about it," says Moore.

Future of solar-charged driving

Solar-charged driving's broad appeal – everyone from environmentalists to libertarian energy independence advocates to average people simply seeking to reduce the money they spend on home electricity and gasoline – makes it an easy sell, notes Moore.

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"It's going to get bigger. How much bigger, you and I can only guess," he says.

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Moore – who hopes to add another 10 kW to his home solar system in the near future so that solar will cover essentially 100 percent of the family's home electric use and electric driving – says much of what happens in terms of EV + PV taking off hinges on solar prices dropping and, more importantly, on the future of electric cars.

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"The key component that's mostly missing right now, is the plug-in cars," he notes.

"I think (Nissan CEO) Carlos Ghosn is right: We'll be at 10 percent electric cars in a decade in the U.S. And once we get to 10 percent tipping point for the market, it's just like it was for color TV, or any other technology, it will snowball after that."



Two Ford Ranger Electrics parked in the Arizona sun. [Photo Courtesy of Paul Moore]

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