

# SP Group calls for tenders to build charging grid for electric vehicles

**30 charging points to be up in six months, and 500 by 2020. Charging small car to take as little as 30 minutes**

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DRIVE your electric vehicle (EV) to the mall and leave with a fully-charged battery in the time it takes to grab a leisurely coffee.

This is one premise behind SP Group's intention to build the largest public EV charging network in Singapore by the end of the year.

On Tuesday, the nation's power grid operator announced that it will install 30 charging points across the island within the next six months, under a larger plan to set up 500 points

by 2020. These points will be installed in shopping malls, residential areas, business parks and industrial sites. All of them will be available to any EV driver.

SP Group chief executive Wong Kim Yin said the move was a logical one for the utilities company to make.

"As the national grid operator, we are in a natural position to look after this because our electricity network is already pervasive. Wherever you want to charge EVs, the nearest infrastructure would most likely be from us," he said.

SP Group has called for two tenders to build the network: one for the supply of charging hardware and the other, for their installation at the charging points.

More than 100 of the new chargers



**The charging points (above) will be in public-friendly points. A car being charged (right). SP Group's grid is expected to raise demand for EVs. BT PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM**



will be direct-current (DC) fast chargers that operate at 50 kilowatts (kW) – enough to fully charge a small EV in as little as 30 minutes.

The rest will be alternating current (AC) chargers that operate at 22kW. These are slower than DC chargers, but still roughly three times faster than the home chargers that EV owners typically install.

Mr Wong would not disclose the amount that SP Group will invest in the network.

A source from Komoco Motors, which imports the Hyundai Ioniq Electric here, told *The Business Times* that a single fast DC charger can cost as much as S\$65,000 with installation. In contrast, a slower AC charger retails for just over S\$5,000 here.

The exact locations of the first 30

charging points are being determined, but the grid operator is inviting the public to suggest sites.

Pricing has also yet to be finalised, but Goh Chee Kiong, the head of strategic development for SP Group, said there would likely be a tiered pricing system between DC and AC charging.

"The investment in DC charging is substantially higher, because we are dealing with higher power ratings," he said.

He added that charging an EV nevertheless costs less than half of what it would cost to run a comparable petrol vehicle over the same distance. Going electric can also halve carbon emissions and reduce noise pollution, he said.

SP Group is developing a smart-

phone app that will help EV drivers locate available charging points and pay for their electricity.

As a power distributor, SP Group is unlikely to sell the juice to EV drivers directly. Instead, it will probably collect a tariff for the energy while building owners where the charging points are installed will be paid for the power supplied to them.

EV retailers reacted positively to the announcement.

Kevin Teng, the managing director of Wearnes (Renault), said: "This is extremely promising for the EV scene in Singapore, and could be a catalyst for widespread adoption of the quiet, environmentally friendly technology here."

In May, the company launched the Renault Zoe, a compact electric hatchback, and the Kangoo ZE, an electric panel van aimed at fleet operators.

A spokesman for BMW Asia, which imports the BMW i3 EV and six Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle models, also welcomed the move.

Preeti Gupta, the director of corporate affairs for BMW Asia, said: "We believe electro-mobility is the future for Singapore and SP Group's bold contribution puts us a step closer to making this a reality."

SP Group's Mr Goh said the company hoped that the network would stimulate demand for EVs in Singapore.

"The common grouse by many prospective EV buyers in Singapore is always, 'Where are the charging points?' We have done our homework and we believe there is a certain threshold that we need to cross in terms of being pervasive and also having higher (charging) speed."