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Monetizing EV Charging Stations For Long-Term Success

By **Levi McAllister** (February 20, 2026, 5:21 PM EST)


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Despite strong sales numbers, the state of the electric vehicle industry in the U.S. at the conclusion of 2025 could best be described as one of confusion. As sales numbers increased year over year, changes in various federal policy initiatives signaled potential trouble ahead for the EV market.

Such forecasts may be premature. Data and policy actions point to an industry that is still growing — albeit at a slower pace than in the prior three years.

Given these developments, the adequacy of public charging infrastructure is likely to remain a key issue that directly affects the growth trajectory of the EV industry. Adequate and commercially successful public charging infrastructure can alleviate consumer range anxiety, while inadequate infrastructure can aggravate it.

All market participants — including site hosts, charge point operators, electric utilities and consumers — are directly affected by the extent to which charging station development is commercially successful and widespread in scope. This two-part article considers issues that should be paramount in developing new EV charging projects.

The **first installment** discussed host site options and selection, distribution grid infrastructure requirements and costs, and permitting and timeline impacts. This second installment considers the importance of monetizing charging stations, contractual relationships with partners, and the reliability and security of charging stations.

Monetizing Charging Stations

Ideal site selection, efficient permitting processes and close utility coordination can set a commercial charging venture up for success. However, success throughout the life of a venture will understandably turn on the extent to which the charging station owner or site host can monetize operations. Charging station operations present several potential revenue streams that, collectively, can enable commercially successful ventures.

For example, with infrastructure installed at retail site hosts, charging availability can facilitate higher consumer spend at the site host establishment. This opportunity is intuitive, of course, because the period of time a consumer spends charging the vehicle is a period of time in which the consumer may also spend patronizing the retail site host.

As a corollary, the installation of charging infrastructure itself can place a retail site host on a literal map of available charging stations that EV owners peruse when identifying locations that offer charging availability — thereby indirectly marketing the retail site host and its products or services.

A more direct revenue opportunity for charge point operators and site hosts is through fees assessed for using a charging station. Although some owners and operators may assess a fee for a consumer to occupy an EV charging parking space on, for example, a flat fee or per minute basis, a more predominant opportunity arises through the charge point operator or site host's sale of energy to a charging customer. The owner/operator may assess a kWH fee for energy that the consumer draws from the charging station.

In that instance, successful monetization will turn on efficient arbitrage between the per kWh fee assessed to the consumer and the utility rate design mechanism applicable to the charge point operator or site host, i.e. the utility customer. In short, the rate a charge point operator or site host assesses to the charging customer should be equal to or higher than the rate assessed by the utility to the charge point operator or site host in order for the venture to be profitable.

For that reason, developers should carefully consider the applicable rate design that will apply to the charging infrastructure. Rate design mechanisms vary across jurisdictions and utilities. Generally, potential mechanisms may include any one or the combination of the following:

- Time-of-use rates whereby the price for energy charged by the utility to the charge point operator or site host varies based on the time of day or season, with lower fees assessed during off-peak hours and higher fees assessed during peak load periods;

- Volumetric rates whereby charges are based on the energy consumed irrespective of time of day or season; and

- Demand charges whereby fees are assessed by the utility based on the highest power demand over a specified period of time.

Each of these mechanisms present advantages and disadvantages, and their application should be considered in light of projected customer usage of the infrastructure.

In addition, developers and site hosts should consider potential changes to utility rate design mechanisms that may occur in the near or longer term — during operation of the infrastructure — in order to contemplate the economic impact of those utility fees. The environment surrounding this point is currently evolving, so developers and site hosts should make sure to assess potential actions of state legislators or public utility commissions that might facilitate revisions to utility rate designs applicable to public charging infrastructure.

Examples may include policy proposals to develop EV-specific rate designs, temporary or permanent revisions to the application of demand charges, or the imposition of large-load tariffs. Although the current climate surrounding large-load tariffs is typically discussed in the context of data center interconnections, contemplated size thresholds surrounding the characterization of "large load" could potentially encompass charging station networks in some areas.

Contractual Relationships With Partners

If the analysis suggests that a potential project can be economically profitable to operate based on the above, attention should then turn to ensuring that the rights and responsibilities of potential parties are adequately and properly contractually documented.

In some instances, the developer, owner and charge point operator of a charging station is also the owner or lessee of the real estate on which the station will be sited. However, these instances are the minority. Instead, the majority of installations involve a developer or charge point operator that installs and operates the station and a site host that either owns or leases the real estate on which the station is sited. This paradigm raises the need to adequately document the contractual arrangement.

In its simplest iteration, a site host agreement documents the rights of a charge point operator to access the real estate parcel upon which a public charging station operates. And, while some stations are currently operating in U.S. markets subject to a contract that serves only that function, those contracts leave all parties exposed with respect to a number of issues that are germane to the successful operation of commercial charging infrastructure.

A myriad of issues are likely to, and do, arise between charge point operators and site hosts as early as the groundbreaking of a charging station development and during the course of station operations. Issues may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Whether real estate rights are provided to the charge point operator through a lease or a license;
- The applicable fee structure between a charge point operator and a site host for real estate access rights, i.e., a stated fee, a percentage of energy sales or an alternative mechanism);
- Where and how energy will be metered between the utility, the charging station and the site host;
- Responsibilities for station maintenance and notification surrounding outages;
- Uptime obligations;
- Implications and/or impact of temporary or permanent closure of the site host;
- Information or data sharing relating to charging customers; and
- Lighting and signage obligations at and adjacent to the charging station.

In a number of instances, properly documented rights and responsibilities can mitigate potential disagreement or dispute between charge point operators and site hosts during station operation. In turn, proper documentation can help facilitate the commercially successful operation to the benefit of all involved.

Reliability and Security of Charging Stations

Consumer satisfaction with a charging station will only be as good as the station's operability and security.

For several years, consumer surveys in various media cite station outages as an issue plaguing the charging sector. Understandably, consumers that identify a charging station as a resource expect the station to be operable when it is needed — much like consumers expect a gas pump to be operable when pulling into the station.

Broken connectors, internal devices requiring maintenance, a failure in network operations that prevents connection to the station, or inoperable payment processing hardware and software all contribute to consumer dissatisfaction that negatively affects the success for the charge point operator and the site host.

Developers should be careful to consider the adequacy of the hardware and software that will be installed with these concerns in mind. Likewise, charge point operators and site hosts should consider these potentials when documenting the contractual rights and responsibilities of the parties in applicable site host agreements. The availability for inoperable stations to be repaired in a timely manner is critical for the ongoing and successful operation of a station. Likewise, awareness and understanding of software developments, networking structures and the capabilities of service provider options are all important for both the charge point operator and site host.

Conclusion

While the revocation of certain policy incentives may slow the rate at which EV adoption in U.S. markets grows, the industry continues to grow. The extent to which consumers are willing to adopt EVs will turn in large part on the adequacy and availability of a robust network of publicly available EV charging stations. Development of publicly available charging stations has increased somewhat in prior years, but build-out remains inadequate to satisfy projected demand.

For developers, charge point operators and potential site hosts, opportunities exist to close the gap. Those opportunities will only be as successful as the careful planning and consideration that industry participants give to successful charging installations and operations. Although not exhaustive, these issues are key in pursuing commercially successful charging stations; in fact, they are key in charging the EV industry forward in the U.S.

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