



Charged up about electric cars

By Carley Thornell | Sunday, November 13, 2011 | <http://www.bostonherald.com/> | [Automotive](#)

The move to sell electric cars was natural for Dan Enxing, who's been plugged into the automotive industry for 25 years.

Now he and co-owner John Zaeder are set for a December soft opening of their first freestanding eCars of New England dealership.

Enxing and Zaeder are transforming a Reading building blighted by petroleum contaminants into a sparkling new space where they'll sell fuel-efficient used cars and serve as the state's only authorized dealer for the two-seat electric cars made by Wheego.

"The first question everybody seems to ask me is, 'Do you feel safe driving it?' Absolutely," said Zaeder, referring to the Wheego. "All you need to do is sit down in one. It has a steel-reinforced frame and weighs almost 3,000 pounds, though it's small in size."

Both the Whip, a 35 mph commuter option, and the 70 mph LiFE have the same body style. The former has a 40- to 50-mile travel range before it has to be recharged for eight hours, and the LiFE has a 100-mile range and an eight- to 12-hour charging time, depending upon voltage.

Wheegos' flexibility in using both 110-volt and 220-volt chargers, their longer range and lower price points compared to other manufacturers' electric options make them more attractive, said Zaeder. They retail for \$19,000 and \$32,000 respectively and each has federal tax incentives, but Zaeder touts other advantages, too.

"There's no tune-ups, there's no oil changes, none of that maintenance," he said. "It's about 3 cents per mile to operate so it's one-tenth the cost of riding a traditional car."

There will be plenty of fuel-efficient used models such as the Honda Civic and Toyota Prius hybrids alongside free charging stations at the Reading lot.

Spots to juice up electrics are often a challenge to find, but Zaeder and Enxing, family friends and Andover residents, are working with their town and Reading to install more.

Enxing also plans to offer Tesla's new four-door electric sedan, a sleek and sporty model retailing for \$60,000 that could go a long way to changing people's perceptions of the electric car. In addition to eCars, he owns Hudson, N.H.-based Subaru of Nashua.

Zaeder said some drivers are attracted to the Wheego because most of its parts, excluding the chassis which is built in China, are made in America and the car is assembled in California. The Atlanta-based company was started by Mike McQuary, the brains behind Internet access provider MindSpring.com.

eCars is set to be fully operational by New Year's.

Article URL: <http://www.bostonherald.com/business/automotive/view.bg?articleid=1380569>



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