

Mevo eyes different model for Auckland

Jeremy Wilkinson - Mon, 07 Aug 2017

Car-sharing start-up Mevo is planning a full-scale launch in Auckland having trialled a gradual build-up of the service in Wellington.

The company has been building its fleet of hybrid electric Audi A3 Sportback e-trons in the capital city and now has two pods of three and four cars and chargers now operating at Clyde Quay and Queen's Wharf respectively.

The firm is on the brink of opening a further two sites in Wellington's CBD — effectively doubling its fleet in the city — and is also eyeing expansion to Auckland, Christchurch and even across the ditch to Sydney and Melbourne.

"Our goal is to be spread over five cities with 2,000 vehicles in the next five years," co-founder Finn Lawrence says.

"We have a proposal that we'll be talking to Auckland Transport soon for what our service could look like for the city."

Mevo received \$500,000 of funding from EECA in January to help expand its service to 50 cars in Wellington. Lawrence says the firm will complete that target before expanding into Auckland.

"We would like to launch at scale — like 50 cars at once — rather than the scale-up approach that we've taken here in Wellington. It would also launch with a free-floating model as opposed to the station-based model here," he says.

"Some things we're considering is bunching charging stations together as well as making them available to the public. You wouldn't have to return the car to the charging station either — you could leave it in any parking space in the home-zone."

Lawrence says there's still a lot of policy development that needs to be done in Auckland to provide for its service, and it's too early to put a solid timeline on the process yet.

Goals

Commercial take-up of electric vehicles is considered key to meeting the Government's goal of having 64,000 EVs on New Zealand's roads by 2021. There were 4,214 at the end of July according to Ministry of Transport data.

Mevo had previously aimed to have another 21 hybrid cars available in Wellington by the end of July but has encountered a few problems with the charging sites being in public spaces.

The next two three-space pods to be installed are on Ballance St and Willeston St in Wellington's CBD. These will be the first opened in public spaces — parks taken away from the Wellington City Council's quota of standard vehicle carparks to be used exclusively for Mevo's vehicles.

Choosing locations for the cars is a collaborative process depending on where the network can support them, which carparks the council is willing to relinquish and where consumers are keen to see them installed.

"We have a bit of a process that we go through with the Wellington City Council — them being one of the main stakeholders, and it being their parks that are being converted," Lawrence says.

"In some parts of the city there's simply not enough electricity for the EV charging stations, so that's something we're working through with Wellington Electricity."

The firm has another nine planned locations in the Wellington region which will get it most of the way to its 50-vehicle goal. It's also seeking submissions on a further nine potential locations.

Usage

Mevo isn't disclosing its usage data but reports that its seven-car fleet made twice as many trips in June as in May.

Lawrence says the average trip duration has risen to almost two hours and that customers are travelling farther-afield. Despite this, about 90 per cent of trips were completed within the 50-kilometre all-electric range of the vehicles' battery.

"With nine cars in the CBD area we're really ramping-up the availability of our service to businesses," he says.

"The weekends just go gangbusters at the moment."

In fact, it's gotten so busy Lawrence says the firm may look at restricting residential usage of the fleet to make cars more available for businesses.

