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## GREEN: Ford Electric Vehicles - Ford Plugs In But Where's The Charge?

August 17, 2009  
By Nancy Dunham

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If you build it, they will come - or at least that's the premise Ford Motor Co., is operating under as it works with municipalities, utilities and other partners to fund and build the infrastructures needed to power electric vehicles.

Ford is set to launch an electric version of its Focus in 2011. Despite the company's warp-speed efforts to push its alternative fuel vehicles and supporting infrastructure ahead for what will likely be the first mass-market pure battery-electric passenger car available, the process is slow at best. Ford is not an automaker that claims an electric car is right for all consumers, but they fret that without support it might not even be right for the niche consumer.

"There is a whole lot of hype out there now that makes electrified plug in vehicle look very sexy," said Nancy Gioia, Director, Sustainable Mobility Technologies and Hybrid Vehicle Programs, at Ford. "We need to make sure that this is something that works for utilities, that it is affordable transportation that can be sustained year after year."

That's not to say that Ford's product isn't ready go to head-to-head with its competitors. Ford is in the late stages of putting the finishing touches on the four-passenger Focus, which they expect will have a 100-mile range when it's introduced. Basically the car - which has not yet been priced - will look like a Focus, drive like a Focus, but be green.

"One thing that is important is making the driving experience as common or similar to that of a conventional car as possible," said Gioia. "You can drive it differently so you can get more out of your vehicle but you can also turn a key or press a button and go."

The greatest challenge in developing the car, said Gioia, is tweaking the size, cost, and durability of the plug in battery.

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#### 2010 Ford Focus

Price Range: \$15,995 - \$18,485

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But now the real work needs to be done -- determine what consumers need to make the car feasible for daily use and help expedite that infrastructure.

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Ford arguably has an edge on some competitors in determining what customers want from the lithium-ion battery powered Focus. It received a \$10 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, which has allowed Ford to team with a host of utility industries and other relevant partners to road test a fleet of [Ford Escape Hybrid Plug-ins](#). Those hybrids operate on the same C-platform as the Focus. [...next page >>](#)

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The vehicle-to-grid communication technology is helping the battery serve as a storage to prevent the costly blackout standing at about \$90 to 100bn per year. That means utilities are shedding cost for additional storage facilities and ratepayers are selling electricity for peak hours so that EVs can make more economic sense, as we know.

It is also in the best interest of electricity utilities that EVs are going mainstream, thereby they need to put in charge stands where needed around highways, major roads with card readers or cell phone tech.

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