



THE FUTURE OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES: **EDUCATING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

Priority Area #5: Educate Government Officials

When: 2024 to Present

Where: South Dakota

Major Partners: Electric Mobility South Dakota, Native Sun Community Power Development, SAGE, Red Cloud Renewable, Dakota Cornerstone, and Kul Wicasa Wopasi.

Purpose

To increase electric vehicle (EV) awareness and adoption for South Dakota local and Tribal governments by building on the initial investments in Tribal Nation EVs and EV infrastructure within the State. This will be done through education and outreach on fleets, community services, utility engagement, and economic development. In South Dakota, Tribal governments and nearby local governments can help show rural and remote communities how the benefits of EVs can positively impact them and their individual transportation needs.



Figure 1. SAGE with Electric Van acquired for Standing Rock Transit through the Electric Nation program

Narrative

Through Native Sun Community Power Development's Electric Nation Program, and in partnership with the South Dakota-based nonprofit SAGE, roughly \$1.5 million dollars in EV investments have been made on Tribal lands in South Dakota. This includes Level 2 and Level 3 fast charging stations placed at key government buildings and at or near government services and enterprises. It also includes the deployment of electric pickup trucks, transit vans, side-by-sides, and passenger cars that are now being used by Tribal governments for fleet needs, public services, and economic development at government enterprises such as casinos.

Formed in 2026, Electric Mobility South Dakota (EMSD) intends to build on these investments and to enhance their impact. It will do so by working with local and Tribal governments to educate them on how optimization of their current vehicles and infrastructure can lead to better utilization, and how additional fleet conversions to EVs and additional charging stations can help significantly extend the benefits of electric transportation to more South Dakota and Tribal citizens



The new chapters that have joined EMSD are particularly well positioned to undertake this important endeavor:

- SAGE was instrumental in helping the Standing Rock Sioux government ascertain EVs and EV chargers for their lands in northern South Dakota and North Dakota. SAGE has close ties to the Standing Rock Sioux government with strong relationships throughout its departmental structure.
- Red Cloud Renewable is establishing electric transportation and renewable energy infrastructure and training for the Pine Ridge Reservation in the Western part of the state. Red Cloud Renewable has strong ties to the Oglala Lakota Nation (Pine Ridge Reservation).
- Kul Wicasa Wopasi is a nonprofit organization based near the central part of South Dakota and has been working with the Lower Brule Tribal community to help educate young people on clean transportation and energy technologies as potential career paths. Kul Wicasa Wopasi has strong ties to the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe's government.
- Dakota Cornerstone is a nonprofit organization based in Eastern South Dakota and has been working with communities at the Tribal local, municipal, county, and state level to help find innovative ways for different levels of government to develop workforce training in clean technologies and sustainable food and energy pathways. Dakota Cornerstone intends to work with the town of Watertown, SD, to help EMSD perform education and outreach on EVs and EV charging for the town and nearby Lake Traverse reservation (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate).

Together, these chapters and Native Sun Community Power Development can work with local and Tribal governments across the state to build on existing EV investments, and present compelling reasons to expand upon them.

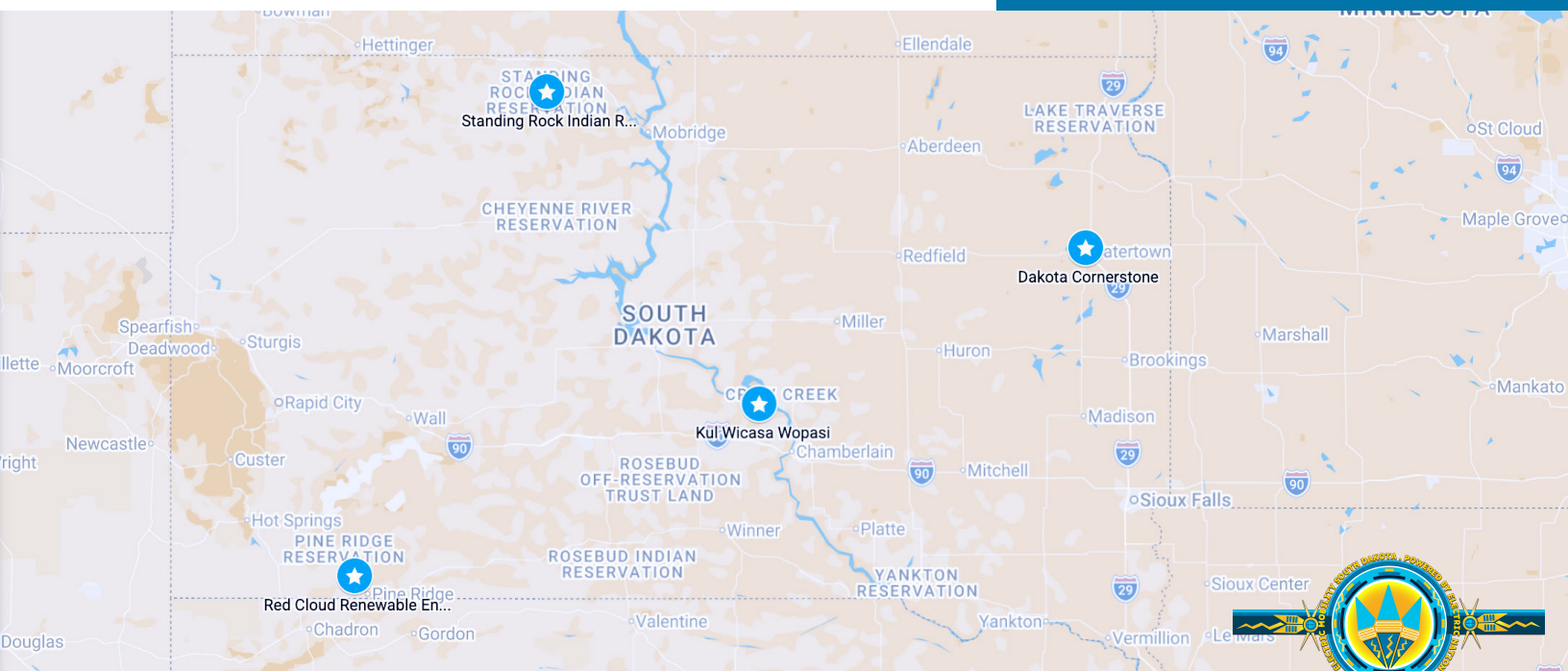
Outputs & Outcomes: In August and September of 2026, Electric Mobility South Dakota (EMSD) will build on Electric Nation's \$1.5 million dollar investment in EVs and EV infrastructure in South Dakota Tribal Nations by educating South Dakota-based governments. This will have the following intended outputs and outcomes:

- **Output:** Hold virtual and in-person engagements with at least five Tribal governments and one local government on the benefits of EVs



Figure 2. Electric pickup and side-by-side at an Electric Nation charger at the Standing Rock Sioux Nation

Figure 3. Location of Electric Mobility South Dakota Chapters



Outputs & Outcomes. Continued

- Output: Provide information for each of these governments on how EVs can significantly improve the cost and operations of their fleets
- Output: Hold meetings with utilities on how they can better serve each of these governments on their EV plans and operations.
- Outcome: Help build a groundswell of EV interest and action from the ground-up in South Dakota through more active participation by local and Tribal governments within the state. This can help lead to a stronger interest, understanding, and action on EVs by the state of South Dakota.

Best Practices & Lessons Learned

- Working with Tribal leadership and local governments in South Dakota can generate an interest in EVs and infrastructure that extends to other communities in the state
- While we intend to educate local and Tribal governments on the benefits of EVs and provide technical assistance on acquiring and operating them, it is important to note that each Tribal government is different and will receive advice from outside voices in different ways. Always being sensitive to this is important for progress to be made, and to respect Tribal sovereignty. Similarly, EMSD will approach local governments like Watertown with a sensitivity to what transportation means to a rural community.
- Working with utilities is an ongoing process to build better relationships with Tribal and other governments. The utility landscape for EVs in South Dakota is perhaps more challenging than in other states regarding demand charges and other important factors. EMSD sees engagement with utilities on their relationships with South Dakota governments as a long-term process.

- Focusing on key community services and economic development is a resonant message for EVs and EV infrastructure in SD. EVs that help get people to work and school while also saving local and Tribal governments operational costs at the same time can be seen as a much-needed service when trying to balance budgets and provide services to people in need.

Also, providing EV charging at government enterprises such as casinos can help increase tourism and economic development



Figure 4. Level 2 and Level 3 Chargers at the Grand River Casino & Resort in South Dakota

