Appendix C: Focus Group Summary Notes

EV Focus Group for Property Managers

Date: 3/27/2024

Staff: Sofia, Colin, and Allison

Purpose: This focus group was convened to gain understanding of barriers to EV charging installation for multifamily property managers and potential options for reducing those barriers, with the ultimate goal expanding EV charging access in multifamily buildings in Bellevue.

Participants:

3 property managers of multifamily buildings of 100% renters

1 board member of a condo association of mostly condo owners

Summary Themes:

- Grid capacity issues and concerns
- Lack of information about how to begin and complete the charging installation process
- Charging Level
- Incentives and rebates
- Concerns about security, convenience, or other attributes of EV charging
- Difficulty navigating the charging installation process
- EV/EV charging benefits
- Cost of charging and/or maintenance

Major Barriers:

The major barrier for property managers who had begun the installation process was navigating power availability and grid capacity. The property managers who had begun the process did not feel they had enough grid capacity to install the level of charging they would ideally prefer. They also felt that once they had started the process, there was a great deal of confusion about how to navigate it. When they faced roadblocks, they were unsure of what resources might help them understand how to deal with them, or where they could go for help.

The major barrier for property managers who had not begun the installation process was not knowing how to begin or what the process would look like for them. These property managers were concerned about how to understand their property's charging needs, grid capacity, and potential incentives available.

Additionally, all of the property managers expressed some uncertainty over whether Level 1 or Level 2 charging would be more appropriate for their buildings and resident needs.

None of the property managers were very familiar with existing state or federal incentives for installing charging.

Barrier Reduction:

The property managers who had begun the installation process identified more electricity/grid capacity and more rebates as the main things that could reduce barriers. They also identified resources that would help property managers navigate the process as important to barrier reduction.

Property managers who had not begun the process identified resources for property managers on beginning and navigating the process from start to finish as the main thing that could reduce barriers.

Notes:

Topic	Responses
Introductions, role	Participant 1 manages MULTIFAMILY BUILDING A, a small property of 66 units, which will eventually be renovated into 15 towers and 14 acres. 100% renters. Participant 2 works at MULTIFAMILY BUIDLING B north of Bellevue—he's far away from downtown Bellevue, and he's interested in what it will look like in the future to get EV access. He's been there for 2 weeks now and has noticed that a lot of tenants have EVs already parked in their parked carports. He has 108 units. 100% renters. Participant 3 is from MULTIFAMILY BUILDING C. He has 425 units in a downtown, commercial mid-rise, mixed-use building. They currently have some EV charging stations, but need to add more. 100% renters. Participant 4 is on the board of CONDO BUILDING A, which are 64 units on the corner of [CONDO LOCATION]; they have 125 parking spaces, all of them in garages, and they have a 15-space visitor parking garage. They have been looking at adding up to 4 EV charging stations in their common visitor garage, but are getting pushback from the homeowners who would like EV charging at their individual parking spaces, which have concrete slabs and power issues. Worried about complying with the Revised Code of Washington. Participant 4 has a rental cap at 8 of 64 units.
Background with electric vehicles	Participant 4 thinks that everyone at his condo association wants fast charging. Everyone at their association wants them, but there isn't enough power to install them for everyone. He is concerned that charging 110 vehicles fully overnight would not be able to be done on their existing power. This issue has come up at association meetings because there was a tax credit for EVs going away at the end of the year, and many of the people who purchased them are charging at Tesla for free at the mall, or in Downtown park, but there is a lot of chatter at the association meetings about people wanting charging in their parking spaces rather than the visitor parking garage. The parking garage is a pass-through garage that is open at each end and prone to vandalism, which

	means that people are worried about the security of cars charging overnight. Also some concern about theft of charging cables from public charging stations. General concerns about security and convenience of charging. Participant 3, who has been at MULTIFAMILY BUILDING C for over a year. They have had EV charging available for a year and they've been completely rented out, and the problem is that there is much higher demand than availability (they don't charge for electricity). Their phase 2 building is maxed out on electricity). They have grid capacity essentially for charging at only 30 spots, but they have over 600 spots in total in their garage. Participant 2 is wondering about what it looks like not having any charging now—he thinks it would be relatively easy for someone to come in and install charging. Is the location of his property an issue? He is far away from the downtown urban core. Participant 1 has not much experience at her property with issues regarding EVs or tenant interest.
Incentive awareness	Participant 4 is working with ChargePoint, proceeding with possibly installing 2 charging stations in their visitor parking garage, and ChargePoint has notified them that they might be eligible for a tax credit as a 503c, but he thinks that the coast of installing 2 chargers would be so small the tax credit wouldn't even apply. Participant 1 does not know of incentives. Participant 2 doesn't know of incentives. Participant 3 says he was aware that Tesla was offering some incentives.

Have you ever looked into or attempted to install charging for resident use in your property or building?	Participant 3 says that installing charging at his building was a nightmare. There was a lot of problems with it being a new building, and acquiring the correct permits. The entire process took five months, and there was a lot of going back. He says the contractor did not like working in Bellevue because of problems with the workflow, which was a less smooth process than he'd experienced at other cities. They were going back and forth with the city about permitting, then failed an inspection. They were very confused about what the city required. Participant 1 says she's had problems with inspection in general, and thinks that they can be very inconsistent. Participant 3 agrees that there was a lack of expertise for assessing power in existing buildings. Participant 4's building was built in 1980, and he's been on the board off and on since 2005, and he's had a ton of experience with the City of Bellevue in terms of inspections. Where Participant 4's group is, they had their annual Homeowners meeting on the 19th, and what they told the homeowners then was that they could install 2 charging stations for $12,500, and that they wanted to proceed. What has happened since then is that they've had it pointed out to them that the RCW 64.38.062 says you can't prohibit a homeowner from installing a charging station in their common area or residence as long as they have the power to do it. So they've been having trouble understanding what they need to do to comply with the law.
Interest in installing charging	Participant 1 says that she would like to install charging because of the emissions reductions benefits, and thinks that charging should be always available everywhere, so that barriers overall to purchasing electric vehicles are lower. Participant 4 would also like 100% installation, from the perspective of resale value of the condos. One of the motivations of the Association to install charging, in addition to making the homeowners happy, is that they think it will increase the value of homes. Participant 4 thinks it won't increase the resale value, but will make homes more able to be sold, because people will expect an EV charging station, just like they will expect a roof that doesn't leak. Participant 3 is looking to install 20%-25% charging, because of current supply and demand, and the current cost of EVs and people who can afford them. They have so many parking spots that it would cost of 2 million dollars to put charging in all their parking spots. Right now, he thinks that if they did all 600 spots, to deal with the maintenance of these chargers, it would be very difficult to maintenance. Concerns about maintenance of charging stations. Participant 2 has 250 spots at his current property, and he has 100 carport spots, which people pay for, but the rest is free. So he's only looking to have 5-6 charging stations at his property. He thinks that is plenty, and he might be open to more in the future but thinks this is enough for now. The issue is that if people don't pay for parking, they don't have an assigned spot, so there's not a good

	way to control who is in the spot using the charger. He doesn't have enough staff or enforcement.
Barriers to installing EV charging	Participant 3 says the power supply has been the biggest challenge. Being told they can only have so many spots, because their power is maxed out. They can have one more Level 1 or 15 more Level 2, which would only get them to 26 stalls over 600 spots. Participant 1's property is coming down, so they haven't installed anything yet. Participant 1 says that if everyone is so low on power, why don't we have an alternating system where there is power sent to certain chargers at different times. Participant 1 wonders how long it takes to do a fast charge. The first time Participant 4 looked into EV charging was 6 years ago, and he ran across a company that was going to do the charging use using fuzzy logic, based on how many cars were hooked up. Participant 2 just started a week ago, so he hasn't looked into installing EV charging yet. Installing EV charging with pay-to-park sounds like a good idea for Participant 2, because there's only him and one other person up there, and he thinks this would make his property more profitable because it would allow him to charge for parking. He has a giant parking lot in the back that accommodates RV and boat parking, so he would be excited to install EV charging there.
What could reduce barriers?	Participant 4 says more electricity. He wants to install a bus bar and then distribute all the new power to the garages. But he wouldn't mind rebates. Participant 3 says more rebates. Because if you're doing a bulk of charging at once, it gets really expensive. His owners are very into being green, and he thinks this would be desirable for his property. Participant 1 says it would be most helpful to have someone to help her understand the beginning-to-end process, because she's never had to deal with it. In this scenario, with multi-family housing, being able to have a resource that outlines from start to finish and the timeline, would be really helpful. Participant 2 says he would like something that outlines the process from start to finish as well. He wants to know the battle. Participant 3 adds that it would be really helpful to have more information on the timeline of how long the process takes and what it entails.

What is needed from the City in terms of charging?	It would be helpful for the City to be able to tell people how much power they would need.
Other transportation amenities	Participant 3 wonders why there isn't a bench at his bus stop. Participant 1 wonders why there isn't a covered bench. Participant 4 says that when e-bikes were introduced in downtown Bellevue, there was a problem with e-bikes being left in Bellevue. Participant 4 has had really good comments about the BellHop, which everyone in the group agrees with. Say it's easy to use, the drivers are friendly, and it's always clean. Participant 1 would like for the BellHop to be expanded.
What else should the COB know?	Participant 4 says that it was apparent more than five years ago that adding EV charging to existing multifamily buildings was going to be challenging, to say the least. He says there was no work done at the State or Federal level to figure out how to do that on a consistent basis. He thinks there should be a manual they can pick up that tells people how to do it, what to do it, how they can get more power. He thinks this focus group is good and the City outreach is good, but he feels that this needs to be addressed on a much larger level. Participant 3 says his owners are building another large complex and wants to know more about the differences between installing charging at existing buildings versus new buildings. Participant 2 says he's excited for more information. Participant 1 wonders who she can continue to speak to about this. She wants there to be a staff person who can walk the property managers through the process from start-to-finish, rather than having multiple different points of contact. Participant 1 has a question about if they have a long-term sustainability plan, and what our plan is for achieving our sustainability plan. She wants us to put the infrastructure in place prior to people needing to use it.