



TREIG E. PRONSCHINSKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 92nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

MAJORITY SERGEANT AT ARMS

Testimony on Assembly Bill 672

Chairwoman VanderMeer and members of the Assembly Committee on Transportation, I want to thank you for your time and consideration of Assembly Bill 672 today.

Assembly Bill 672 would require the Department of Transportation to issue specific decals or registration plates to electric vehicles. Electric vehicles most commonly use nickel-metal hydride and lithium-ion batteries. These specific batteries require a very different response from emergency personnel.

These specific types of batteries can lead to electric shock, thermal runaway, battery ignition, and various other hazardous situations that can leave the passengers involved in the crash and the people responding to the crash in a dangerous situation. First responders, such as firefighters and paramedics need to know how to respond to the crash and without knowing it is an electric vehicle, this hampers their ability to do their job well.

There has been a continual and steady increase of electric cars on Wisconsin roads so it is crucial that we give our first responders every chance to be successful when something bad, like a crash, happens. These emergency personnel need to be prepared for whatever situation they are coming into and this bill would help with that.

I want to make sure to point out that this legislation would use the \$16,000 already allocated in the budget to cover the costs of these license plate stickers.

Senator James and I have both been first responders and we have both come up to crashes and accidents where it would have been wonderful to know what you're getting into. Knowing the type of car and situation you are about to enter will correlate with a more prepared first responder response and I hope that members on this committee can see it the same way we do.

With that being said, I, along with Senator James, look forward to questions, comments, or thoughts the committee might have. Thank you.



January 30th, 2024

Testimony on Assembly Bill 672
Assembly Committee on Transportation
Relating to: indicia of registration for electric vehicles

Thank you Chairwoman VanderMeer and members of the committee for hearing this important legislation today. It's no surprise that the number of electric vehicles on Wisconsin roads continues to increase year over year. In fact, according to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, there were a total of 13,731 electric vehicles registered in the State of Wisconsin at the end of 2022. While most of the discussions surrounding the adoption or rejection of electric vehicles is focused on infrastructure and environmental concerns, my focus is on public safety. Coming from a law enforcement background, the unique safety risks that electric powered vehicles pose on our first responders in emergency situations should be included in these discussions.

The most common batteries used in these electric vehicles are nickel-metal hydride and lithium-ion batteries, which put our first responders, paramedics, EMS personnel, police officers, and firefighters at higher risk when acting in emergency situations. Electric shock, thermal runaway, battery ignition, battery re-ignition, and stranded energy are just a few safety hazards that can occur when these batteries are in use or compromised in some way. While the odds of these hazards occurring may statistically be low, it only takes one faulty battery to take the life or seriously injure the driver or first responder. That is why it is crucial that our first responders are able to clearly and confidently recognize and identify these vehicles as quickly as possible so that they can respond accordingly.

AB 672 would phase in distinctive registration plates or decals for hybrid or non-hybrid electric motor vehicles. Any electric vehicle that operates at 50 volts or greater must display "EV" or another indication on the plate notifying our first responders that the vehicle is an electric vehicle.

AB 672 works in tandem with the \$16,000 already allocated in this past budget to cover the costs of these license plate stickers. A decal or sticker will be provided to EV owners upon their annual license plate renewal if their plates are under 10 years old. Physical EV specific plates will be phased in for existing plates using the 10 year replacement protocol that is already in place. This decal provision will apply until DOT issues physical registration plates that contain an EV marking.

This common sense legislation will enable our first responders to take the necessary safety precautions when responding to EV related calls and will ultimately keep them safer on the job. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill, and I will happily take any questions you might have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse James".

Senator Jesse James
23rd Senate District
Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov



Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary
4822 Madison Yards Way, S903
Madison, WI 53705

Governor Tony Evers
Secretary Craig Thompson
wisconsindot.gov
Telephone: (608) 266-1114
FAX: (608) 266-9912
Email: sec.exec@dot.wi.gov

Testimony of Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Assistant Deputy Secretary Joel Nilsestuen
Before the Assembly Committee on Transportation
January 30, 2024

Re: Assembly Bill 672, relating to indicia of registration for electric vehicles.

Thank you, Chairwoman Vander Meer, and committee members for your consideration of the department's input on Assembly Bill 672 relating to indicia of registration for electric vehicles.

Under this bill, the Department of Transportation must issue to registrants of hybrid and nonhybrid electric motor vehicles distinctive registration plates or decals for display on license plates that identify the vehicles as electric vehicles (EV).

Under current law, hybrid electric vehicles and nonhybrid electric vehicles are already required to bear decals indicating the vehicle is an electric vehicle. Governor Evers' budget provides \$10,000 SEG in FY24 and \$6,000 SEG in FY25 to the Division of Motor Vehicles to design and begin issuing stickers that will identify these vehicles as powered by electricity. The requirement is for electric vehicles be marked with stickers on the front and rear license plates. DMV is in the process of implementing the new requirement. The requirements of existing law appear to satisfy the requirements of AB-672. However, the Department understands the stated goal of the proposal is for distinctive, physical EV specific plates to be phased in using the 10-year license plate replacement protocol already in place.

Under this bill, the license plate indicator is required for all vehicles that operate at greater than 50 volts. DMV does not have access to consistent data regarding the voltage of Hybrid or Electric Vehicles and must rely on vehicle owners to identify their vehicles. DMV would not be able to accurately administer the proposal as drafted.

The proposal is silent how DMV would meet the EV identification requirements on affected license plates. The bill allows the department to "institute any system for issuing new registration plates ... that the department deems advisable, except that the department shall issue registration plates meeting the requirements under par. (a) no later than the time at which the department is required to issue new registration plates under s. 341.135 for the vehicle," but does not provide any funding to implement such a system. The implementation strategy would come at a high cost to the department. Options may include:

- **Stacked letters:** Many current license plates already use stacked letters, which are required to be part of the license plate number. A second set of EV stacked letters would go against American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) standards.
- **EV indication on the sheeting:** License plates are manufactured and stocked in advance of being assigned to a vehicle. Without knowing the fuel type of the eventual vehicle, this solution would effectively double the number of license plate types that DMV procures from the Bureau of Correctional Enterprises and would double the inventory levels for roughly 1,100 DMV and authorized third party partner locations. This would increase both cost and complexity to the license plate fulfillment process.

It's important to note that the department currently issues 121 distinct metal plates (many of the special plates use only 1 metal design but several decals to differentiate the special group, such as UW campus plates and military plates). To design an EV-specific metal plate for each existing plate type, the department would need 121 new plate types at \$23,700 for each plate, for a cost of \$2,844,000. The department assumes that each new special plate created in the future would also require an EV-specific version, doubling the cost to create a new special group plate to \$47,400 for each new special plate. The bill does not provide the department with funding to create and produce these new plates. There is no additional cost to continue to implement the current practice of using decals to identify hybrid and electric vehicles.

The department has identified additional implementation challenges for consideration:

- **Personalized plates:** Depending on the solution implemented, the proposal may negate the availability of personalized and specialty license plates and the revenue associated with these plates. At a minimum, current plates may need to be redesigned with smaller logos or new configurations assigned to make space for the additional EV plate characters.
- **Plate Number Configurations:** Plate numbers can have a maximum of 8 alpha numeric digits. Many current plates already use a set configuration of 7 digits for the non-personalized, base sequential plate (like the standard auto plate ABC-1234) and would not have space for the additional EV plate characters.
- **Varying vehicle types:** This proposal impacts not only basic passenger and light trucks, but also heavy trucks and motorcycles, adding additional administrative complexity. Many of these plates already utilize 7 or more digits, utilize stacked characters or, in the case of motorcycle sized plates, do not have available space to add EV as part of the plate number.
- **Plate transfers:** State law allows the owner of autos and light trucks to transfer the plates to another vehicle of the same type. This allows the vehicle owner to use any

remaining time left on the registration from one vehicle for the replacement vehicle. Under the proposal, registrants of EVs would be unable to transfer their plates to a non-EV, even if both vehicles were of the same type (i.e. auto to auto). This scenario would necessitate a new license plate to be manufactured, with the expense being born either to the consumer or to WisDOT.

- **Customer Confusion:** Customers with hybrid electric vehicles and nonhybrid electric vehicles will have two law changes implemented back-to-back changing the decals and plates displayed on their vehicle. With no consistent approach, DMV expects additional contacts from customers and business partners, such as dealerships.

If the goals of the proposal require a dedicated EV license plate solution without utilizing decals, the proposal would add considerable cost and complexity to the license plate production process. In addition to increased ongoing administrative costs, a significant IT project would be required to implement the stated goals of the proposal. Again, no funding is provided to accomplish the changes required to implement this bill. In the end, the goals of this proposal introduce additional complexity and significant costs while delivering a product that is comparable to the current EV decal requirement in statute.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

**Assembly Committee on Transportation
January 30, 2024**

Testimony on Assembly Bill 672

Testimony of Nate Boettcher, President & CEO Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services

Chair VanderMeer and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to take a few minutes to provide you testimony in support of Senate Bill 672. My name is Nate Boettcher, I am the president & CEO of Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services and our broadband subsidiary SwiftCurrent Connect. I am also the board chair of CHARGE EV, which was founded by all 24 Wisconsin electric cooperatives, and 7 additional cooperatives spread across Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. In total CHARGE EV represents nearly 100 electric cooperatives with the goal of creating a national EV charging network powered by community-owned electric cooperatives.

I testify here in front of you today, seeking your support to approve this bill. I along with several other colleagues have been working to see this legislation across the finish line. In fact, the submitted testimony by Rob Richards from WECA does a great of job outlining many key parts of this legislation, so I will only take a few minutes to reiterate a few highlights.

Your support for a license plate mark represents a great opportunity to demonstrate innovative and proactive leadership along with creating a welcoming presence for electric vehicles. This bill largely provides a safety mechanism to promote and identify the vehicle as being an electrified vehicle. It allows first responders to quickly modify their approach when disabling a vehicle or suppressing flames because of an accident. Providing this critical information can help reduce the time it takes to make decisions in emergency situations. At the end of the day, safety of all involved is important and this identification is just another tool for our first responder community.

Secondly, I note that an EV designation on the Wisconsin license plate helps to ensure that other drivers and those who may not be familiar with electric vehicles see that Wisconsin is open for business when it comes to electric vehicle adoption. It should come as no surprise that states such as Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Illinois that have already adopted EV license plates. These states have a high penetration of EV drivers. This is an opportunity for Wisconsin to still lead the charge and be one of the early supporters, not to mention, if we can beat Minnesota, Michigan, and Iowa in doing this, that's always good day and something we can brag about to our neighbors.

I look forward in seeing this important piece of legislation approved and moved forward. Thank you for your time and your continued support.





Wisconsin Towing Association

A Division of the Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association

CHAIR
Jamon Ingelse
Lanser Garage and Towing

VICE CHAIR
Craig Goldbeck
Goldbeck's Towing

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR
Jean Wedel
Dewey's Towing

SECRETARY
Dan Johnson
WMCA/WTA

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 672 Assembly Committee on Transportation January 30, 2024

Chair VanderMeer and Committee Members,

My name is Dan Johnson and on behalf of the Wisconsin Towing Association, I would like to offer its support for Assembly Bill 672. The members of the Association would like to thank the authors of the legislation, along with the many co-sponsors who support the bill.

Towing and recovery is a dangerous occupation. Each year in the United States, a tow truck operator is killed every six days while performing his or her duties assisting those in need. Tow operators are professionally trained individuals who take great care to protect themselves, and more importantly, protect those they assist on the side of the road. While they understand the hazards that come with the occupation, a new hazard which may create additional problems in the towing and recovery industry has emerged - electric vehicles.

In January of 2021, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued an alarming report regarding electric vehicle and the dangers posed by high voltage, lithium-ion batteries. The report specifically noted the risks involved for towing and recovery operators, and it is those risks that necessitate legislation indicating a vehicle as an electric vehicle. Several other states, including Illinois, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nevada, Hawaii, Tennessee, Rhode Island and North Carolina have enacted similar legislation into law.

According to the NTSB, fires in electric vehicles powered by high-voltage lithium-ion batteries pose the risk of electric shock to responders from exposure to the high-voltage components of a damaged lithium-ion battery. Further, damaged cells in the battery can experience uncontrolled increases in temperature and pressure, which can lead to battery re-ignition.

While recovering an electric vehicle may be problematic, storing such a vehicle may also be a problem. In fact, some electric vehicle manufacturers recommend storing an electric vehicle with a damaged high-voltage lithium-ion battery inside a 50-foot "clear area" to avoid any potential fire from spreading to other vehicles. However, the NTSB finds that may be infeasible at towing storage yards due to limited space.

Last year, the Wisconsin Towing Association hosted three seminars focused on electric vehicles. While the participants gained a great deal of information on how best to handle such recoveries, some have decided to avoid recovering electric vehicles altogether based on the information they received. For them, the risks are too great. That is why this legislation is necessary to clearly indicate the vehicle as an electric vehicle and allow tow operators to decide if recovering, towing and storing the vehicle is in their best safety interests.

The men and women of the Wisconsin Towing Association appreciate the review of this important legislation by the Committee and hope it will lend its support to passage.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Johnson
Division Administrator
Wisconsin Towing Association
562 Grand Canyon Drive
Madison, WI 53719



222 West Washington Avenue, Suite 680
Madison, WI 53703-2719
(608) 467-4650
(608) 467-4651 fax
www.weca.coop

**Assembly Committee on Transportation
January 30, 2024
Testimony on Assembly Bill 672**

Chair VanderMeer and committee members:

My name is Rob Richard and I'm the Vice President of Government Relations and External Affairs for the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 672, relating to indicia of registration for electric vehicles. I appreciate Sen. Jesse James and Rep. Treig Pronschinske authoring this legislation and all who have co-sponsored it.

WECA's 24 electric distribution cooperative members serve more than 279,067 farms, residences, and businesses in the state. Dairyland Power Cooperative, also a member, is a generation and transmission cooperative that provides power to 24 electric distribution cooperatives and 17 municipal utilities in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. Nearly one out of every 10 electric consumers in Wisconsin is an electric cooperative member.

For the last two years, WECA's legislative and regulatory committee has supported the idea of EV license plates. Those in the Assembly who represent electric cooperative service territory may recall this topic coming up with our cooperative members when they visited your offices for our Education and Lobby Days event. Our members will be back in the Capitol again tomorrow. After a lot of discussion and reaching out to legislators, stakeholders, WisDOT, and others we finally have Assembly Bill 672 to support.

WECA has some cooperative members who are really engaged in the EV issue. One is Nate Boettcher, CEO of Pierce Pepin Electric Cooperative, who has helped create a national EV network of cooperatives called CHARGE <http://charge.coop/>. Many in the electric cooperative world believe that knowing who is driving EVs will allow them to educate EV owners about the best time of use for charging to help drivers save money and allow utilities to better manage load.

However, more importantly, several states have created EV plates that have largely been promoted as one way to help first responders quickly identify an electric vehicle when coming upon an accident scene. Many of our cooperatives have hosted EV safety programs by Mike Klimkosky from EVSafe.org based out of Mequon. His organization has put on safety seminars for first responders all over the state and Midwest. He told me this is one more tool first responders can use to identify an EV. He also said the towing industry was a powerful lobby to get the EV plate in IL. As you can imagine there are significant safety protocols when it comes to cutting open, moving and/or extinguishing an EV.

I would like to offer a little background as to how we got here. WECA had asked the Governor's office to include language in his 2023-24 biennial budget that would create an EV license plate. When his budget

was introduced, he decided to create a sticker/decal instead. The Legislature approved the stickers but also included a one-time registration fee of \$1. The Governor partially vetoed the \$1 fee out of the provision.

During the budget process WECA sought language to create a plate instead of the identification sticker but our efforts failed. To the best of my knowledge, no organization or group publicly supported the sticker/decal provision. While the sticker is better than nothing, we don't see it being as effective as stamped lettering.

Budget Provision:

IDENTIFICATION STICKER FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Governor/Joint Finance: Provide \$10,000 in 2023-24 and \$6,000 in 2024-25 to the Division of Motor Vehicles general operations appropriation to issue identification stickers for electric and hybrid-electric vehicles. Require that DOT issue a decal for each electric and hybrid-electric vehicle in the state that identifies the vehicle as electric. Require that the decals must be displayed on the front and rear registration plates of the vehicle, and establish a one-time registration fee of \$1 for issuance of the decals. Estimate revenues to the transportation fund from the decal fee of \$11,000 SEG-Rev in 2023-24 and \$8,000 SEG-Rev in 2024-25.

The budget provision was accounted for in the drafting of Assembly Bill 672. Under this legislation, all existing EVs will receive the decal until they are required by DOT to receive new plates. If/when this legislation takes effect, all new EV registrations will be required to get the EV plate. The legislation gives DOT the ability to freely design the plate, but I am hopeful that they might lean towards a design like this that incorporates stacked, stamped lettering of "E" and "V" to the right. This is a common design feature with many other Wisconsin plates.



One of the reasons I believe the decal/sticker won't be as effective as stamped lettering is the lack of space on the plate. Whether people use license plate frames, or have specialized plates, the lack of space on a plate should be a concern. Also, if a design incorporates the placement of anything on the lower middle area of the plate, then it's almost certain that a license plate frame will cover it up and defeat the entire purpose of the EV plate.





Chair VanderMeer and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in favor of Senate Bill 672. We ask that you please support this legislation and expedite an executive session so it can get to the floor for a vote.

Examples of EV plates from other states:



Passenger



Passenger Personalized



Motorcycle



Motorcycle Personalized

