

EVs are nothing new for this Island firm

BY PEDRO ARRAIS, TIMES COLONIST MAY 11, 2012

Nissan and Mitsubishi aren't the only options for people looking to drive an electric car. The two manufacturers offer new Battery Electric Vehicles available for sale in Canada.

But Canadian Electric Vehicles, a small company in Errington, just south of Parksville, has been manufacturing electric vehicles for the past 22 years. Most of their vehicles are commercial trucks, but they do offer conversion kits for do-it-yourself buyers. Apart from Canada, purchasers come from the U.S., Australia and as far afield as India and Turkey.

"We now sell about four units a month," says Randy Holmquist, president of Canadian Electric Vehicles. "There has been a huge spike of interest in the last six months."

People can purchase a kit, which includes a motor, controller, charger, motor adapter and battery boxes to convert most cars (and trucks) from internal-combustion to electricity. The company has vehiclespecific kits for a number of vehicles - the Chevy S10/S15, Ford Ranger, Geo Metro, Dodge Neon and New VW Beetle. It also has generic kits which provide basic component parts for almost any vehicle on the road.

Prices for each kit varies. A conversion kit for a Volkswagen New Beetle runs \$11,500. Holmquist estimates it will take an inexperienced person up to 200 hours to install the conversion if it's their first time. An experienced installer can perform the procedure in less than half that.

Customers can choose between lead-acid or lithium-ion batteries. The latter is lighter, but more costly. A 30-kWh battery pack (that sits in where the spare tire used to be) will add roughly \$12,000 to the above cost.

The finished car will have a 150-kilometre range and a 140-km/h top speed.

"My customer isn't the person complaining they can't stand the cost of fuel," says Holmquist. "They might as well visit a newcar showroom. The people who buy our kits are hobbyists who want to be involved in every facet of the car's construction. Lately, it's been the hot-rod crowd as well."

He says that direct current (DC) motors are the poor man's hot-rod equipment. A jump from a 50-hp AC motor to a 200-hp DC motor is about \$2,000 more. It will give the VW Beetle performance akin to a Porsche.

A converted Toyota pickup (with two motors) in Delta currently holds the distinction of being the fastest electric truck in Canada.

For more information, go to www.canev.com.

parrais@timescolonist.com