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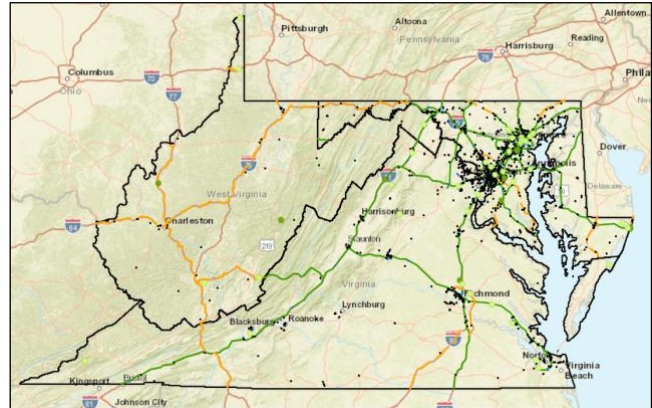# EVNOIRE ADVANCES EQUITY FOR THE MID-ATLANTIC ELECTRIFICATION PARTNERSHIP

Led by Virginia Clean Cities, the Mid-Atlantic Electrification Partnership (MAEP) seeks to enable a regional ecosystem of vehicle electrification for fleets, transportation network companies, and consumers. This ambitious, three-year electrification project, spanning the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, covers electrification infrastructure for goods movement (e.g., ports and airports), passenger mobility (e.g., electric vehicle charging, ridesharing fleets serving social service centers), and commercial and government fleets. The partnership incorporates best practices for community and consumer engagement and workforce and economic development.

This mobility ecosystem is being built through multiple electric vehicle (EV) and infrastructure subprojects, including multimodal hubs such as airports, seaports, mass transit hubs, and logistics centers. The goal of MAEP is to install approximately 375 EV charging units and acquire 175 EVs (light- and medium-duty vehicles and school buses), with a focus on benefitting historically disadvantaged communities.

The MAEP partnership is robust. In addition to Virginia Clean Cities and EVNoire, project stakeholders include Greater Washington Region Clean Cities (vehicle lead), West Virginia Clean Cities, Maryland Clean Cities, Blink Charging, Greenspot, Baltimore Gas & Electric, Pepco, Maryland Port Authority / Maryland Department of Transportation, Dominion Energy, and Argonne National Laboratory (analysis). The overall budget for this 2021−24 project is $14.6 million funded by the U.S. Department of Energy's Vehicle Technologies Office, with a cost share of $8.7 million.

EVNoire leads the MAEP's community and consumer engagement and workforce and economic development efforts. In addition to engaging general-market consumers and other transportation stakeholders, EVNoire connects with underrepresented communities that have borne historical injustices and continue to endure disproportionate health, environmental, mobility, social, and economic burdens. Underlying EVNoire's approach is the understanding that if these communities are not "brought to the table" as the U.S. electrifies transportation, historical transportation-related injustices, with their associated socio-economic consequences, will become further entrenched.



**The Mid-Atlantic Electrification Partnership (MAEP), led by Virginia Clean Cities, seeks to enable a regional ecosystem of vehicle electrification for fleets, transportation network companies, and consumers. Courtesy of Virginia Clean Cities.**

With a staff that reflects the diversity of the communities it seeks to engage, EVNoire helps communities explore e-mobility solutions that increase their clean mobility options, reduce air pollution, improve public health, and increase economic opportunity—all within the context of the communities' own goals.

## PROGRAM DESIGN

With an understanding that the MAEP covers a wide range of diverse communities—from the underserved inner city to underserved rural areas—EVNoire developed an engagement plan around the following pillars: K-12 STEAM/STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics / Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and stakeholders. To fortify these pillars, EVNoire developed "Drive the Future" programs and a complementary outreach campaign around the following:

1. Community Education

2. HBCUs

3. Workplace Charging

4. STEAM / STEM Outreach

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For these areas, EVNoire hosts activities to increase awareness and educate consumers on the benefits of e-mobility, as well as point to opportunities and resources on equitable EV access. The goal is to maximize under-represented communities' access to the health and financial benefits of EV adoption.

In its community education series, EVNoire reaches audiences through digital grassroots engagement, story-telling, and digital and hybrid events. For these events, EVNoire taps its membership organization, EVHybridNoire, the nation's largest network of diverse EV drivers and enthusiasts, to provide local EV drivers to share their experiences and showcase a variety of real-world, affordable EV options.

Between April 2021 and June 2023, EVNoire held 25 events, ranging from community forums to EV ride and drives.



**For the MAEP, the National Society of Black Engineers, one of the largest student-governed organizations in the United States, hosted a virtual, interactive outreach event on the benefits and affordability of EVs in May 2021. Courtesy of EVNoire.**

## COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Landscape analysis is a critical component of EVNoire's work. These in-depth analyses—based on data collection, research, surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions—describe community-identified needs and goals. They include community members' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of the benefits of transportation electrification. These analyses, which are shared with participants to ensure accuracy, inform the development of further engagement strategies and the development of specific pilots and programs.

Landscape analysis begins with engaging known parties in the communities. These "key informants" are community leaders and other active, trusted parties in the community, whether they have official roles or not. For example, they might be the executive director of an agency, a faith leader, or a member of an environmental justice group or a local chapter of a larger clean-air organization.

> "*We believe that communities need to inform and co-create the strategies— that is, the pilots and programs that will work best for them—based on their mobility needs.*" Dr. Shelley Francis, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of EVNoire

## HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCUS)

For the MAEP, EVNoire chose a strong emphasis on HBCUs. With an eye toward engaging future leaders and helping to build a pipeline for what is expected to be millions of new e-mobility jobs in the coming years, EVNoire created an HBCU e-mobility fellowship program. Its components include a year-long curriculum, industry mentorship, peer engagement, and internship opportunities. The fellows engage with each other not only within their institutions but across the HBCU network, making important connections and building relationships. Students benefit from mentoring and internship opportunities, an e-mobility certification, and potential job placement.

The MAEP HBCU program was launched in 2022. The program has expanded to include 12 participating colleges and universities. In the 2022–23 cohort, 25 fellows engaged with more than 20 industry leaders. Overall, live attendance and student engagement was 95%; content engagement and retention, 99.4%; and retention of fellows, 92%. The next cohort begins in Fall 2023.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Because of its focus on developing and nurturing relationships, EVNoire has established a broad and deep network. It is a known, trusted partner in e-mobility, giving it an advantage over organizations that arrive unknown in a community to connect with transportation stakeholders on potential projects. By talking with those in their network, the EVNoire team learns about leaders and other advocates in the targeted communities. When making connections, they ask, "Who else do you suggest we talk to?," leading to new contacts that allow them to deepen their understanding of the community and broaden their network organically.

By design, EVNoire's team reflects the communities they engage with. Team members have lived experience like those in the communities—whether disadvantaged urban, tribal, or rural—which facilitates trust building and information sharing.

Generation 180, a nonprofit devoted to clean energy action, and EVNoire hosted an on-line Q&A forum, "Ask an EV Owner," in April 2021. Courtesy of EVNoire.

Deep understanding of communities enables informed decisions on the best outreach methods, which range from newspaper announcements, mailers, and radio to email, text messaging, and social media. Focus groups and community forums can be held in person or virtually depending on the needs, preferences, and abilities—including mobility and technological access—of those whose voices are sought. Getting a wide range of voices is important. Older populations—in retirement communities, for example—might have fewer mobility needs than they once did but are more likely to have lived knowledge of local historical injustices, such as neighborhoods destroyed to make way for interstate highways.

EVNoire knows that "the messenger matters." Those who have an established relationship with the community and/or are known as thought leaders and trusted sources will be considered allies and will be able to truly engage with community members.

*"The technology transition ahead is important for all people, and collaborations within communities is a critical step in the effort."* Alleyn Harned, Director of Virginia Clean Cities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

EVNoire's recommendations to advance equity in e-mobility come from work with not only the MAEP but from years of work with underserved communities, urban, rural, and tribal.

☐ Engage with community stakeholders.

☐ The messenger matters.

☐ Meet people where they are.

☐ Assess and understand community demographics and context.

☐ Continually engage and reflect to the community what is understood about their goals.

☐ Build and nurture relationships.

☐ Resource local partners for their time and expertise.

☐ Sustainable funding is critical for long-term success.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS