

Logan police to become Ohio's first law enforcement agency with Tesla cruisers

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The Columbus Dispatch



The Logan Police Department expects to receive these two Tesla police cruisers – soon to be outfitted with the department’s decal and standard equipment – within the next six to eight weeks. *Courtesy Of The Logan Police Department*

Elon Musk is making his mark on southeast Ohio.

The Logan Police Department, 50 miles southeast of Columbus just outside of Hocking Hills State Park, will become the first law enforcement agency in Ohio to upgrade its fleet of traditional police cruisers with two Tesla electric vehicles, outfitted as fully equipped patrol cars.

The city is partnering with Enterprise Fleet Management, an offshoot of the rental car agency that helps companies and government organizations manage their vehicles.

While many Logan residents may not be concerned with Musk — the tech guru and SpaceX architect who initially funded Tesla and serves as the clean energy company's CEO — the business magnate's electric cars will provide exciting opportunities for the city, police Chief Jerry Mellinger said.

Enterprise will minimize the cost of police vehicle maintenance and lease three new patrol cars to the department, two of which will be long-range, all-wheel-drive Tesla Model Ys, he said.

"I commend our city council for being forward-thinking and trying to do what we can for the county and the citizens of the county," Mellinger said. He added: "and ultimately save taxpayer money."

The cost to lease each Tesla is a little over \$51,000, but there's a lot of misconception over what that price means, the chief explained. New, gas-powered police cruisers — usually Dodge Chargers or Ford Interceptors — are \$1,500 to \$2,000 cheaper to buy, but cost the department \$35 to \$50 to fill up at the pump each week.

The new Tesla models are projected to save the department at least \$40 a week by costing the city \$10 worth of electricity to reach full charge and a range of 300 miles.

Additionally, Capt. Ryan Gabriel explained that the city had acquired a rural development grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture to subsidize the cost of upgrading the Teslas — ensuring the vehicles will be equipped as regular patrol cars with the Logan Police Department decal and design.

Mayor Greg Fraunfelter and the council also are in talks with the Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC), which has agreed with the city to fund the installation costs of two electric charging stations in Logan, Mellinger said.



East Main Street in Logan, with the Hocking County Courthouse at right *Doral Chenoweth III, The Columbus Dispatch*

"More and more cities are going down this path," he said. "And Hocking Hills draws tourists to our county, and we want to be able to provide some alternatives to visiting folks (with electric cars) to entice them."

Still, there's been some pushback from residents and complaints on local Facebook pages about the merits of electric police cruisers, Mellinger acknowledged.

"You'll always have people that aren't going to be happy about it," he said, "but down here in Hocking County and the city of Logan people aware of the program that have spoken to me are excited about it."

The chief also explained the city is technically a part of a pilot program through Cincinnati Safety Upfitters, the business responsible for equipping the police department's cruisers, which is looking to become an authorized modifier for Teslas in Ohio.

"All the planets aligned," Mellinger said. "We were looking at ways to improve our fleet with new environmentally friendly technology, Enterprise

could provide us with leases and the Cincinnati Safety Upfitters were looking to become the state's Tesla upfitter."

The two Tesla cruisers should arrive in Logan within the next two months, Mellinger said, and he hopes the city's embrace of electrics will make the department a role model for other Ohio agencies.



Logan police Chief Jerry Mellinger hopes electric charging stations for the department's Tesla cruisers will attract more Hocking Hills visitors – like this couple pointing to a patch of red trillium growing in Conkles Hollow State Nature Preserve in 2017 – to the city. *Brooke LaValley, The Columbus Dispatch*

"If the pilot works like we are expecting it to, we'll probably move forward with it in the future," he said.

Mellinger envisions a few more cruisers in the future, and possibly even a truck.

"It's going to be a wonderful program."

Céilí Doyle is a Report for America corps member and covers rural issues in Ohio for The Dispatch. Your donation to match our RFA grant helps keep her writing stories like this one. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation at <https://bit.ly/3fNsGaZ>.

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