

# Roth: Electric vehicle market charging ahead

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on March 5, 2018.

---



Jim Roth is a Director and Chair of the firm's Clean Energy Practice.

## Electric vehicle market charging ahead

Two million and counting. This was the title of the 2017 Electric Vehicle Outlook report by the International Energy Agency.

The market for electric vehicles continues to gain ground, although relatively speaking, it remains a small percentage of all U.S. auto sales. Still, every major car manufacturer has electrification plans, meaning their vehicles will operate using some amount of electric power.

Certain companies like Volvo are even vowing to cease building solely internal combustion engine vehicles. That is, the company does and will continue building hybrids, which by definition contain both gas and electric components. But like

its competitors, Volvo will shift focus to all-electric vehicles, as sales for hybrids have declined, and EVs have become more ecological and economical.

The industry has evolved from the Prius-style gasoline-electric hybrid, to plug-in hybrids, to fully electric vehicles, sometimes called battery electric vehicles, and hydrogen cell vehicles. Toyota introduced the Prius to the U.S. in 2001 and still holds about 80 percent of the hybrid market.

If current trends continue, many predict this gasoline-electric-style hybrid will be obsolete before the combustion engine. Several causes support this notion. The shale revolution resulted in an influx of American oil and gas. An abundance of oil has made gas prices lower than 10 years ago when they peaked at \$4.11 and the U.S. was primarily an importer of oil. This means consumers are at least slightly less concerned about gas prices, making a hybrid less appealing.

Next, an abundance of natural gas helped stabilize electricity prices, and making it more financially feasible to use electricity to charge a vehicle. Plus, the technology continues improving – batteries hold a charge longer and recharge quicker than ever. So, depending on consumer predilection, be it to save money on gas, to save the environment, or, simply to own the latest automobile technology, choices will likely include a battery electric vehicle or a gas vehicle, or, eventually as more fueling infrastructure is built, a hydrogen cell vehicle.

The U.S. is not the only country with growth in this industry – last year China led the way in the number of electrified cars on the road. Such a boon for battery electric vehicles will become an opportunity for the electric power sector.

Unlike many developing countries that lack consistent

electricity for even basic needs, in the U.S. we enjoy such reliable electric power sources that many of us can elect to recharge electric vehicles overnight while we sleep. Or perhaps even using the electricity harnessed during the day via our rooftop solar panels at our places of work. Either way, the trend helps one imagine a future where your car is a large battery with four wheels that is ebbing and flowing electrons into an energy market and you are paying or being paid as the case may be.

*Jim Roth, a former Oklahoma corporation commissioner, is an attorney with [Phillips Murrah P.C.](#) in Oklahoma City, where his practice focuses on clean, green energy for Oklahoma.*