

# Press Release



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**For Immediate Release**

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## Blue Ridge Receives Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Grant from Appalachian Regional Commission



**Featured photo:** An electric vehicle uses a charging station outside the Patton Building of Blue Ridge Community College on Feb. 23, 2024. (Photo by Benjamin Rickert. [Photo for media use](#) available on Google Drive.)

**HENDERSONVILLE, N.C.** – The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) announced this week approval of a grant in the amount of \$367,182 to Blue Ridge Community College to support their 'Expanding Electric Vehicle Infrastructure in Western NC' project. With resources provided by both ARC and the College, project funding will total over \$734k. The initiative will address the critical training needs for electrical vehicle (EV) mechanics, charging station maintenance and first responder safety protocols.

Dr. Scott Queen, Blue Ridge Community College's vice president for economic and workforce development, explained that the funding will enable the purchase of two fully electric vehicles for training in both Henderson and Transylvania counties, as well as professional development for Blue Ridge automotive faculty.

"Blue Ridge Community College is committed to providing state-of-the-art training to support the current and future needs of our regional business, industry and community partners," said Dr. Queen. "This grant provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission will afford our College the opportunity to augment current automotive systems technology programming to include training for fully electric vehicles - in addition to hybrid vehicles already incorporated into the curriculum."

There is a documented lack of EV infrastructure in the region needed to support the expansion of EV use to address state and national goals. North Carolina currently has approximately 1,400 EV charging stations, and plans to accommodate 1.25M EVs by 2030. The charging infrastructure will have to expand significantly in order to accommodate this significant growth, and it is essential to prepare a skilled workforce to support the EV ecosystem.

Blue Ridge will develop and implement short-term job training programs and expand apprenticeship programs to address these critical needs. The main proposed project activities to address these needs are to update current programming in Electric Vehicle Mechanics to include pathways for high school students, and develop short-term training opportunities to address the maintenance of electric vehicle charging stations. Both programming areas will incorporate opportunities for apprenticeship.

Through the purchase of electric vehicles and EV charging equipment, as well as curriculum and certificate development, students will receive hands-on training and key credentials to succeed in the growing EV industry. In addition, the project will support Blue Ridge's NC Department of Labor registered apprenticeship program, Apprenticeship Blue Ridge, in the Automotive Systems Technology and Electrical pathways.

"Blue Ridge Community College is proud to drive innovation and sustainability with support from the Appalachian Regional Commission and alongside our industry partners," said Benjamin Rickert, Blue Ridge Community College's director of communications. "This grant underscores Western North Carolina's commitment to preparing for the future of the transportation industry and the workforce needed to sustain it."

In September, Blue Ridge Community College hosted an [electric vehicles workforce development event](#) as part of the Land of Sky Clean Vehicle Coalition's 'Drive Electric Week.'

More information about Blue Ridge Community College's automotive and transportation technology programs is available at [www.blueridge.edu/automotive](http://www.blueridge.edu/automotive).

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#### **About Blue Ridge Community College**

*Blue Ridge Community College is a two-year, post-secondary institution that elevates the educational experience to prepare students for 21st-century success in the workplace or at four-year colleges and universities. Providing real-life, affordable, and accessible education, the College offers more than 200 degrees, diplomas, and certificates; more than 200 online courses; and fast-tracked job training.*

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