
ELECTRIC DRIVE BY '25:
How California Can Catalyze Mass Adoption of Electric Vehicles by 2025
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Back in

2012, CLEE and the Emmett Institute released a report called "Electric Drive by '25," with the relatively bold subtitle "How California Can Catalyze Mass Adoption of Electric Vehicles by 2025."

The report cited 2011-12 EV sales as reason for optimism on achieving mass adoption by 2025:

> Early results from the introduction of new electric vehicles to the U.S. market have been promising, with sales of both Nissan LEAFs and Chevy Volts outselling the popular hybrid Toyota Prius in its first year of sales, 9,674 (LEAF) and 7,671 (Volt) to 5,562 (first-year Prius sales). As of May 2012, plug-in electric vehicles comprised approximately 30,000 of the cars in the United States, more than four times as many as the year before.

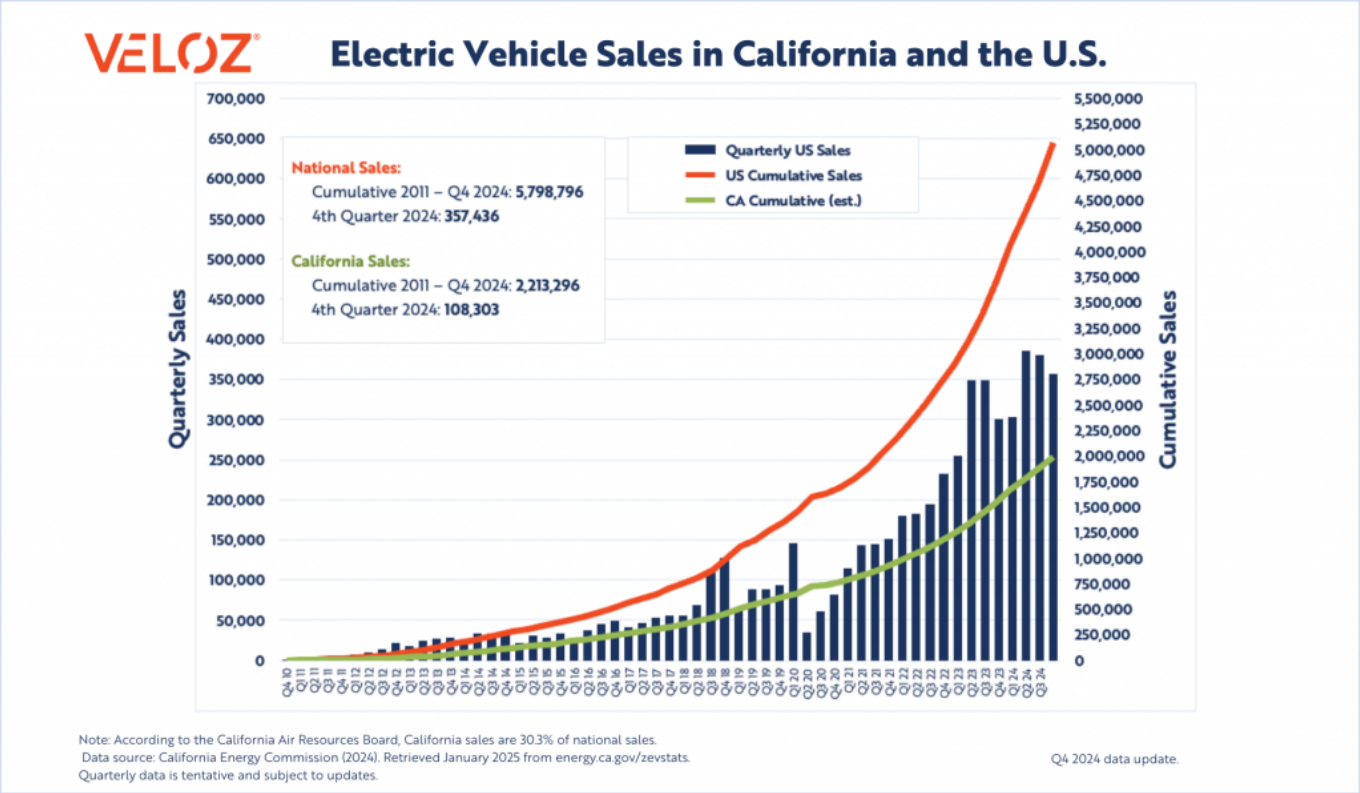
13 years later, the plug-in hybrid Volt is no more and the LEAF is revamped and a relatively minor player, while the Tesla Model Y was the best-selling vehicle in the world in 2024, outselling the Toyota Corolla.

And what would "mass adoption" look like for the then-relatively distant year of 2025 in California? The California Air Resources Board at the time:

> …predicted that the new [Advanced Clean Cars] program and ZEV regulations would result in over 1.4 million ZEVs on the road by 2025, comprising over 15 percent of vehicles sales that year.

And now that it's actually 2025, how is the state doing? Did it live up to its goal?

Turns out the state was way too pessimistic. According to the nonprofit Veloz that tracks EV sales, California in fact had 2,213,296 electric vehicles on the road by the end of 2024:



So what lessons can we draw from this 2012 time capsule report review? First, and most obviously, electric vehicles have taken off better than a lot of people thought. Second, regulators in California, at least at the time, were clearly aiming too low with their goals!

There’s still a ways to go to get EVs to 100% of new vehicles sales (the new goal is to achieve that percentage by 2035 in the state). But the market has reached critical tipping points. And while action on climate change is urgent and we still need faster deployment of EVs, it’s important to celebrate wins where we can, especially on something as monumentally important as reducing emissions from transportation.