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## **Biden lauds electric cars in Michigan as climate agenda hits road bumps in Washington**

### **President’s trip to opening of GM plant building electric Hummers comes as Congress debates his plan**

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HAMTRAMCK, Mich. — President Biden continued his infrastructure sales tour Wednesday with a visit to the Detroit area, promoting American-made [electric vehicles](#) and his broader public works law while the rest of his climate agenda hangs in the balance in Washington.

The car-aficionado-in-chief took a spin through a General Motors plant retooled to manufacture electric cars, proclaiming that Detroit has led the world in electric vehicles and that the new infrastructure law would further boost the use of non-gasoline-powered vehicles across the country.

“We’re going to make sure that the jobs of the future end up here in Michigan, not halfway around the world,” Biden told a crowd of about 300 GM workers, most of whom work on the electric vehicles. “That means that here in Detroit, you’re going to set a new pace for electric vehicles. This is not hyperbole. It’s a fact.”

Biden, who met with Chinese President Xi Jinping this week in a highly anticipated virtual summit, added, “Up until now, China has been leading in this race. That’s about to change because of this law.”

Biden's appearance reflected a White House push to ensure that the infrastructure legislation is not just a policy victory but also delivers political boost. Michigan was the second battleground state Biden visited in as many days, following a stop Tuesday at a crumbling bridge in New Hampshire.

The president's approval ratings have continued to flag, with [a Washington Post-ABC News poll](#) showing that just 41 percent of Americans approve of his job performance. Many Democrats have criticized the White House for not doing more to convey how Biden's agenda would improve the lives of ordinary people, and Wednesday's visit appeared to be in part a response.

Before his remarks, the president, a longtime automobile fan, toured GM's "Factory Zero" plant, which was reconfigured recently to build electric trucks and SUVs as part of the automaker's plan for a zero-emissions lineup by 2035. Biden, whose love of cars goes back decades, seemed awed, remarking on how exciting he found it and adding, "It's incredible."

When a GM worker told Biden that the new electric vehicles were faster and heavier than the president's beloved Corvette, he said, "If I had been asleep the last 50 years and woke up to one of those, I really would have been in trouble, but I'd swap title for title."

He also test-drove a white electric Hummer on the factory grounds, jokingly asking the assembled members of the news media whether they wanted to jump in the back — or on the roof — and remarking, "These suckers are something else!"

The trip to Michigan was part of a broader effort to promote the [just-signed \\$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill](#) that dedicates \$7.5 billion to constructing a nationwide network of electric vehicle charging stations. And it comes as lawmakers are debating how much money to include for Biden's climate initiatives, including tax breaks for electric vehicles, as part of [a separate, nearly \\$2 trillion package](#).

The administration is also trying to finalize [rules](#) tightening tailpipe emissions for newly built cars, SUVs and pickups, meant to bolster sales of battery-powered vehicles. The work must be done before the end of the year for the administration to have any hope of reaching its goal of having electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles make up half of new-car sales by 2030.

Biden's tour comes just days after a two-week climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, that reached an agreement that even many organizers [acknowledged](#) doesn't go far enough in cutting carbon emissions. Boosting the manufacture and sale of cleaner cars in the United States now represents one of the last chances for Biden to notch a win in his fight against global warming before year's end.

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Drivers could get a rebate of up to \$12,500 when buying an electric car, if the Democrats' broader \$2 trillion proposal passes in its current form. Because no Republicans will support the measure, Senate Democrats are using a procedural maneuver that allows them to avoid a filibuster, but still requires the support of all 50 Democrats.

The most crucial remaining undecided vote lies with Sen. Joe Manchin III, who represents gas- and coal-producing West Virginia. The centrist Democrat has repeatedly objected to the electric vehicle tax credit's size and scope.

Under the Democrats' original proposal, Americans could claim the full credit if they make less than \$400,000 a year individually or \$800,000 as a couple.

But in negotiations, Manchin has argued that those income thresholds were too generous to wealthier Americans, and House Democrats have settled on a lower income cap of \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for couples.

Manchin has further alienated some Democrats by questioning part of the tax credit that allowed a \$4,500 rebate for union-made electric vehicles. Speaking at a Toyota plant in West Virginia, he [called](#) the extra incentive for electric cars rolling off the line of union-organized factories "wrong" and "not American."

The labor-friendly tax credit would help the traditional Big Three U.S. automakers with factories represented by the United Auto Workers — GM, Ford Motor, and Stellantis, the parent company of Chrysler — but nonunion auto companies such as Toyota oppose it. "Let's not play politics with the environment," the Japanese automaker [announced](#) in a newspaper ad this month.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (Mich.), a champion of the union-friendly tax break, said in an interview Tuesday that she was disappointed by Manchin's opposition but "particularly astounded at the way Toyota has been acting in all of this" given that its Japanese factories are unionized.

"They do everything they can to stop our American companies from being able to sell in Japan," added Stabenow, who joined Biden in Detroit. "We don't do that to them."

The GM assembly plant hosting the president opened in 1985 and straddles the cities of Detroit and Hamtramck. The company retooled the facility to make electric versions of vehicles in the Hummer and Silverado lines.

Democrats hope the tax credits would work in tandem with a pair of proposed regulations from the Environmental Protection Agency and Transportation Department designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from and improve the fuel efficiency of new cars, SUVs and pickups built over the next four years.

But regulators need to complete their work before Dec. 31 so that carmakers can comply with the requirements for the next model year.

While the tax credit gets watered down in Congress, administration officials are preparing to finalize more stringent standards than they proposed in August. The EPA [plans](#) to strengthen emissions standards for new cars built during the later years of the program, which runs through model year 2026, according to an individual briefed on the rulemaking but not authorized to speak publicly about it.

A spokesman for EPA, which sent the car rule to the White House for review last week, declined to elaborate on the agency's plans.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/11/17/biden-electric-vehicles-detroit/>