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What will it take to get you ready to drive electric? Fans, CEOs weigh in

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William Shatner loves fast cars, fast motorcycles and fast horses. And being first is another hallmark of the iconic “Star Trek” actor as he proved again when he shot into space a few weeks ago at age 90 — making him the oldest person to do so — compliments of Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin Rocket.

A motorcycle enthusiast who owned two Harleys, “one for the East Coast and one for the West Coast,” Shatner told me during a conversation for “Our Electric Future,” a CBS 62 TV special airing at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 7, that he traded them in not long ago to get a new electric motorcycle Harley-Davidson had coming out.

He thought it would get 200 miles or more without needing to be charged and ultimately was better for the environment. But after trading in his Harleys and cutting a check for the difference, and before the bike was delivered, he learned the range was, in fact, far less.

“I wanted my money back,” he told me, and he eventually got it.

Like many consumers deciding whether to go gasoline-powered or fully electric as GM, Ford, Stellantis, Rivian, VW and others offer greater choices in EVs, Shatner experienced range anxiety and got cold feet. For now, he’s sticking with gasoline-powered cars and trucks and waiting until “electric ones get more mileage.”



While Shatner no longer has any motorcycles in his garage, he does have Pedego electric bikes — lots of them. He bought his first one in 2011 (to keep up with his grandkids during family ridealongs) and became such a fan he's now a spokesman for the California-based company.

Shatner is one of many folks from business, politics and academic circles I talked to about the electric revolution unfolding before our eyes. While centered on EVs as more are being introduced seemingly every other day, it's a conversation taking on greater importance with greater electrification of our homes, businesses and communities expected in coming years.

Jerry Norcia, president and CEO of DTE Energy, is another motorcycle enthusiast who also happens to come from Canada (like Shatner) and who loves riding his Harley on weekends. We talked about range anxiety and other challenges facing the nation's electrical grid as we sat inside the company's new Electrical Systems Operations Center in Detroit.

With a growing need in Michigan and elsewhere for electric charging stations, DTE is partnering up to help find solutions.



“We’re working closely with industry associations and automotive partners to develop growth estimates that are being incorporated into our strategic distribution grid plans for the next 15 years,” Norcia said.

The Midwest Charging Network was created and includes DTE, Consumers Energy, Alliant Energy, Ameren Illinois, Duke Energy and others. The partnering companies have launched programs to incentivize the installation of chargers in key areas to build confidence and make long-distance interstate EV travel a viable option.

More: [Whitmer wants EV charging circuit around Lake Michigan](#)

John Smith, a former auto marketing executive, embraced the electric future following a vacation in northern Michigan with his wife as they rented Segways. He quit that job to start Seg Adventures LLC in Plymouth, a tour

company, in 2010. He moved into Segway retail ownership and rebranded in 2017 as Great Lakes Segway. He opened the Walled Lake locations — Segway dealer and service center — in 2018. And then, he opened Pedego Walled Lake in April of this year and acquired Segway of Central Florida and opened Pedego Mount Dora in Mount Dora, Fla.



Bob Lutz, known as the quintessential car guy who served as former vice-chair of GM and held top jobs at Ford and Chrysler (aka, Stellantis), has been a fan of electric vehicles for years.



The 89-year-old executive has been saying the industry was destined to go electric. Of the many vehicles that came to life under his watch, he told me, the Chevy Volt — a plug-in hybrid from 2008 — topped his list as having the most impact. It helped kickstart the electric revolution now underway at GM.

The Volt was made at GM's Factory Zero (as the plant is now called) near the Detroit-Hamtramck border. The facility is about to be re-christened next week as it reopens to assemble the electric GMC Hummer SUV.

More: [GM may double revenues as it pivots to increased capacity for EV assembly at factories](#)



Ray Scott, president and CEO of Lear Corp., also talked with me for the Sunday night show about the changes, opportunities and challenges suppliers are facing as they adapt to keep up with automakers in this kinetic and growing electric environment.

A few weeks ago, the Southfield-based company broke ground on a new facility in Detroit that will provide seats to electric vehicles at Factory Zero once it is complete.

Steve Nalu, owner of Towns Mart Marathon Center in Washington Township, is running full speed ahead into the future as he installed electric charging stations at his gas station with plans of adding more.

He was joined by Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel and Justin Spence, general manager of Oscar W. Larson Co., which installed the chargers there and elsewhere around the state, as we talked about more EVs obviously on the

roads as you see them plugged into chargers popping up at grocery stores, libraries, colleges like Oakland University and public places like Beacon Park in Detroit.

Former Gov. Jennifer Granholm was at GM's Detroit-Hamtramck plant and drove the first Chevy Volt off the line back in the day. Now serving as U.S. energy secretary, she and I talked several weeks ago when she visited Detroit and got a sneak peek at GM's Factory Zero coming to life. She talked about Detroit and Michigan and the move to powering EVs, which the nation is suddenly doing in grander scale.



Yep, make no mistake, the future is electric and it's getting brighter by the day.

“Our Electric Future” airs 6:30 p.m., Nov. 7, on CBS 62. Among those appearing: President Joe Biden, Mary Barra, Bill Ford, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter, Oakland University professor Ka C Cheok, U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, Joe Grace, Gerard White, Michelle L. Reaves and Bia Hamad.

Contact Carol Cain: 313-222-6732 or clcain@cbs.com. She is senior producer/host of "Michigan Matters," which airs 8 a.m. Sundays on CBS 62. See William Shatner, Bob Lutz, Mujeeb Ijaz and Natalie King on this Sunday's show.