

A Buying an electric car isn't too great an extra cost in the US: if you purchase an electric vehicle, you're eligible for a federal government tax credit of up to seven thousand five hundred dollars. There are also many states that offer incentives for people who are prepared to invest in an EV.

B Many say that, if you take into account fuel and low maintenance costs, EVs can, in fact, save you money. But did you hear what the boss of Fiat Chrysler said? He hoped consumers wouldn't buy the Fiat 500e -the technology inside is so costly that the company loses fourteen thousand dollars on each one.

A He was joking, of course! But carmakers do find themselves in a predicament today: Americans have been buying more green cars of all types, but as gas prices are relatively low, companies have had to introduce steep discounts to keep sales from stalling.

B According to research from InsideEVs.com, almost one hundred and twenty thousand electric vehicles were sold in the United States in 2014. That represents a twenty-three per cent jump from 2013, and an increase of one hundred and twenty-eight per cent from 2012.

A That kind of growth may not continue, because EV sales are sensitive to the price of gas.

B Yes and we've been enjoying gas prices well below three dollars a gallon, the lowest since 2010. Though the trend today is back to rising prices.

A So green-car manufacturers and dealers aren't enjoying easy lives as drivers of old-line internal combustion engines are saving money on fuel. Gas prices and the more economical combustion engines that have been developed are making electric cars less compelling. When gas isn't too expensive, people aren't willing to put up with the inconvenience of having to charge their car.

B Though according to the US Department of Energy, electric cars like Fiat 500e are still more cost-effective to drive. The Department estimates that Fiat 500e owners pay the equivalent of gas at one dollar twenty-nine cents a gallon to run their cars. But so far, even if consumers aren't bothering to do the calculation, automakers are continuing to make huge investments in green vehicles, introducing one model after another.

A Sales of new cars and trucks in the United States increased about six per cent in 2014, to sixteen and a half million vehicles, the industry's best overall performance since 2007. Electric vehicles made up less than one per cent of total sales, but the strong United States automobile market has increased most automakers' profits, which allows them to invest heavily in alternative-fuel technology.

B Yes, but car manufacturers really have no choice, they have to meet the government regulations. By 2025, they have to reach the required corporate average fuel economy of fifty four point five miles to the gallon. At present automakers average about twenty-five miles a gallon. Curiously, that standard isn't based on the cars the automaker actually sells, it's based on the average of the automaker's whole fleet.

A The chief executive of Fiat Chrysler said as much - the proliferation of electric vehicles was inevitable, he claimed, because regulations mandate lower carbon emissions and greater fuel economy. This, he said, was the beginning of a long process to try to deal with the issues of CO2 and mileage.

B Consequently, car buyers do have quite a range of EVs to choose from now - in all, more than twenty models have hit the market.

A But people hesitate about buying an electric car. Apart from price, one of the problems is the limited driving range. In January, General Motors brought out a refreshed Chevrolet Volt, which runs on battery power with a gasoline-engine backup and has a fifty-mile electric range. At the same time, GM also introduced a concept car, the all-electric Chevrolet Bolt, which isn't yet in production. It's claimed that the Bolt will be getting two hundred miles on a single battery charge.

B But many people attracted by the Bolt may hesitate about buying an electric car. They may prefer to wait until there are charging stations on every highway.

### Outline

Sales of new cars and trucks in the United States increased by about six per cent in 2014, to sixteen and a half million vehicles, the industry's best overall performance since 2007. Electric vehicles made up less than one per cent of total sales, but as the strong United States automobile market has increased most automakers' profits, they can afford to invest heavily in alternative-fuel technology. In fact, car manufacturers have no choice: they have to meet the government regulations, which means that by 2025 they have to reach the required corporate average fuel economy of fifty four point five miles to the gallon. The proliferation of electric vehicles is inevitable because regulations mandate lower carbon emissions and greater fuel economy.

### Questions

1 Are electric vehicles a subject that is often discussed in your city? 2 Would you be interested in buying an electric vehicle? 3 Do changes in the price of petrol make you change the form of transport you use? 4 Is the proliferation of electric vehicles inevitable? Are electric cars as eco-friendly as carmakers claim?