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UBER: ELECTRIFYING A GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

One of our core beliefs is that in order to effect systematic change at scale, you actually need economic incentives to drive behavior. People trying to do the right thing can act as a catalyst for activity, but ultimately, it runs out of steam unless you have an economic flywheel…. This is not getting 1,000 vehicles over to EV, it's not getting 2,000, it's hundreds of thousands of vehicles.

—Dara Khosrowshahi, Chief Executive Officer, Uber[1]

INTRODUCTION

Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi stood backstage listening to the low hum of conversation filtering through the heavy curtains. In front of him sat an audience of regulators, automakers, journalists, environmental groups, and numerous Uber employees from product, operations, and policy teams. It was the opening day of Uber's Go Get Zero event in October 2024, the company's second annual sustainability product showcase.

As he waited for his scheduled speaking time, Khosrowshahi prepared to announce a series of new initiatives designed to accelerate Uber's progress toward its global target: becoming a zero-emissions mobility platform by 2040, with fully electric rides in the United States, Canada, and Europe by 2030. The new features included deeper integrations with charging providers, enhancements to Uber's Electric Vehicle Hub for drivers, and the expansion of Uber Green to major cities worldwide.

The event was more than a public policy announcement or public relations talking point. It reflected a deliberate decision to treat sustainability not as "doing the right thing," but as a comprehensive global product and business objective essential to Uber's long-term economic

[1] Interview with Dara Khosrowshahi, September 2, 2025. Subsequent quotations are from the authors' interviews with Khosrowshahi and other Uber executives unless otherwise noted.

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viability. It also established accountability and deadlines for the team, requiring leaders to show tangible sustainability progress that worked within the economic realities of the business, rather than simply signaling values.

Khosrowshahi paused, reflecting on how improbable this moment would have seemed when he joined Uber seven years earlier. The path to this stage had not started with a climate pledge or polished strategy, but with a regulatory change in London that threatened Uber's ability to operate in one of its flagship global markets. Khosrowshahi and his leadership team's strategic decisions, bold commitments, and product and operational execution on sustainability ultimately set Uber on a course that would shape its identity, culture, and products for years to come.

THE PERILS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Uber's electrification strategy unfolded against the backdrop of growing global urgency around climate change. By the early 2020s, scientific consensus had made it clear that the world was on a narrow timeline. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions would need to be cut roughly in half by 2030 to preserve a reasonable chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.[2] Beyond that threshold, the world would face irreversible loss of its most fragile ecosystems and elevated risks of extreme heat, severe weather events, sea-level rise, agricultural disruptions, and climate-driven migration.[3]

Transportation accounted for approximately one-quarter of global energy-related CO_2 emissions, a figure that increased steadily each year.[4] Road transportation represented the majority of these emissions. Urban air quality challenges persisted worldwide, with internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles contributing to respiratory illnesses, premature deaths, and billions of dollars in annual health care costs.

Electric vehicles (EVs) were widely seen as a critical solution for reducing emissions, but adoption varied dramatically by region. For Uber, a platform responsible for tens of billions of miles traveled annually, the company's climate footprint was significant. The majority of miles driven by Uber drivers were in ICE vehicles. As emissions became a more prominent part of public discourse, Uber's growing environmental impact drew increasing attention.

The global climate context created both a moral imperative and a strategic opportunity for the company. Sustainability was becoming more central to brand reputation, regulatory favorability, and consumer expectations. For Uber, the challenge ahead was immense: How could a global multi-sided marketplace, consisting of millions of independent drivers and hundreds of millions of riders, shift toward electrification in time to help meet climate goals? The answer, as Khosrowshahi would later describe, came not from abstract strategies or corporate messaging, but from a concrete, urgent decision he faced early in his tenure.

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[2] "The evidence is clear: the time for action is now. We can halve emissions by 2030," Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) press release, April 4, 2022, https://www.ipcc.ch/2022/04/04/ipcc-ar6-wgiii-pressrelease/.

[3] Foreword, "IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C," IPCC, 2018, https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_Foreword.pdf.

[4] "UN Climate Change Fact Sheet," United Nations, October 14, 2021, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/media_gstc/FACT_SHEET_Climate_Change.pdf.

THE LONDON CATALYST

Beginning in 2012, Uber's London operations were regulated by Transport for London, the city's integrated public transit authority. After temporarily losing its license to operate in 2017[5] shortly after Khosrowshahi's arrival as CEO, the company moved to strengthen governance of its U.K. business. Laurel Powers-Freeling was appointed chair of Uber's London board in 2017, followed by Susan Hooper and Roger Parry as independent non-executive directors in 2018, to help provide additional oversight on Uber's business practices within the city.

In 2016, Sadiq Khan was elected mayor of London and made clean air and the reduction of London's dangerously high levels of air pollution a major priority for the city. This led to two key policy changes in April 2019. First, Khan's administration instituted an Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in Zone 1, which consisted of the city center, levying a £12.50 daily charge for vehicles driving within the zone that were not ultra-low emission vehicles (including plug-in hybrid ICE vehicles).

Second, the longstanding broad exemption that previously allowed all licensed private-hire vehicles (PHVs) to enter the Congestion Charge Zone (a smaller central zone than the ULEZ) for free was removed. At the time, the Congestion Charge Zone levied £11.50 per day for driving in the area between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays, which was charged on top of the ULEZ fee. Under the new policy, only PHVs that met the "Cleaner Vehicle Discount" criteria (such as being zero-emission capable) or were wheelchair-accessible remained exempt from paying the Congestion Charge Zone fee. These regulatory changes threatened to substantially raise drivers' operating costs and reduce the profitability of their work, potentially amounting to thousands of pounds in additional annual expenses per driver. Some of those costs would likely be passed onto rider fares as well, impacting ridership demand.

Following the announcement, Uber's London and global leadership teams pondered how to respond to the new rules. While they understood the upfront potential impact to driver economics and ridership costs, they also spotted an opportunity to engage thoughtfully and collaboratively with the mayor's office to accelerate sustainability in London. Aligning with the mayor's environmental goals could help rebuild trust and demonstrate how Uber could serve as a constructive, responsible partner. It could also potentially provide Uber a first-mover advantage in sustainable transportation. Jill Hazelbaker, chief marketing officer and senior vice president of communications and public policy, remarked:

> We knew that because we had this history that had perhaps colored the way that people might think of us, that we really needed to lead with substance. We needed to have a very specific idea of what we were trying to do in terms of percentage of miles driven, that we're going to be sustainable or going fully electric, and also have the commitment to really put money behind this.

[5] Sadiq Khan, "Uber deserved to lose its licence – Londoners' safety must come first," *The Guardian*, September 22, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/22/uber-ban-london-safety.

Khosrowshahi also weighed the affordability implications of complying with these new clean air laws against the long-term societal benefits of transitioning his London driver fleet to electric vehicles, stating:

> In most cases, one of the values that we have as a company is we want to make transportation as affordable as possible to as many people as possible in any place that we operate in. The policy for London, which was congestion pricing, would result in higher prices. Upon first view of that, that would be a policy that we would normally be against because you're increasing the cost of transportation and that generally goes against the core value… But we found in this case, we could use this as an opportunity to engage positively with London with something that was important to them, and that we could use it as a kind of live example of Uber working with government to drive sustainability in a scalable way and create very significant incentives to move over from internal combustion engines to EVs. So we thought of this as an opportunity to do something different, and we decided to lean in and work very constructively with London.

London's Clean Air Plan and the Electrification Fund

With London's congestion policies moving forward, Uber faced multiple core challenges: The total cost of ownership of EVs (aggregate vehicle prices, charging costs, and maintenance costs) was still higher than ICE vehicles, charging infrastructure remained limited, and the used EV market was immature, leading to limited opportunities for secondhand purchases. Up until this point, most drivers, who often accepted low-margin trips and generally had limited financial resources, had been very cautious about switching to EVs. In 2019, at the time the ULEZ was instituted, there were only approximately 100 EVs on the road driving for Uber in London.

Uber's London team recognized that drivers needed help bridging the gap between the high upfront cost of purchasing an EV and the long-term savings associated with lower charging and maintenance costs. In January 2019, Uber's London leadership implemented a Clean Air Fee program, placing a 3 percent surcharge on all Uber trips originating in London. Revenues from the surcharge were attributed to individual drivers and could be applied toward purchasing or leasing an EV. The plan effectively created a city-scale electrification investment vehicle, funded by riders, to help drivers overcome the early cost barriers.

In 2019, Uber was competing with London's famous "black cab" taxi fleet. There was no scaled second competitor in the mobility market, as upstart ride-sharing competitor Bolt was still in the early stages of entering London. The £0.15 per mile additional surcharge per ride still placed Uber ridership costs well under the cost of competitors. The team believed Uber's market position provided them with some pricing cushion and that Clean Air Fees would not create a meaningful risk to the company's profitability and growth.

Uber's London team partnered with multiple automotive manufacturers—including Nissan, Kia, and Hyundai—to provide preferential pricing for Uber drivers purchasing electric vehicles. The team also collaborated with BP Pulse, the newly established EV charging arm of energy giant British Petroleum, to provide driver discounts and install charging infrastructure across London. This effort focused particularly on increasing charging access in Zone 2 and Zone 3 neighborhoods, where many Uber drivers lived and operated. In parallel, Uber worked directly

with three London boroughs—Brent, Newham, and Redbridge—investing £5 million to install more than 700 fast chargers. Drivers also were offered discounted access to BP Pulse's charging subscription program, further lowering the total cost of EV ownership. Uber's Chief Operating Officer Andrew Macdonald elaborated:

> Beyond the general need for more charging infrastructure, which pretty much exists in every city around the world, specific to Uber, our drivers don't necessarily live in neighborhoods that are well-served by public charging. They don't necessarily live in single-family homes where they can have a Tesla plug-in charger in their driveway. They live in apartment buildings or complexes that may not have in-building parking or rely on street or parking lots. So we felt it was really important to invest in charging as well.

By 2022, Uber had raised £145 million through its Clean Air surcharge program in London. A growing number of drivers had also begun transitioning to EVs independently of Uber's program, signaling market momentum toward EV adoption. That year, Uber's UK team stopped actively accruing surcharge funds, believing sufficient capital had been generated to support most drivers in making the switch. The program then shifted into its "spend" phase, encouraging drivers to effectively "cash-in" their accumulated balances alongside additional discounts Uber secured with OEM partners. For example, in 2024, Uber launched a "Power Up Package," combining vehicle grants with discounts of up to £17,000 on selected Kia EV models. By the end of 2025, 40 percent of miles driven on Uber's London platform were electric—and tens of thousands of Uber drivers had transitioned to EVs, up from approximately 100 in 2019.

Early Rider-Side Learnings

London also became an early testbed for understanding rider behavior around sustainable products, as Uber had built a sufficiently large EV supply base to pilot new offerings. Initial consumer research suggested that riders expressed a strong preference for lower-emission trips. The natural question was whether they would be willing to pay more for that preference.

Early pricing experiments for "green" ride options confirmed a well-known tension. While survey respondents often said they would pay more for sustainable trips, their actual behavior told a different story: When faced with higher fares, most riders chose the cheaper standard option. However, many riders were willing to wait longer for an electric car at the same price. Khosrowshahi elaborated:

> One of the first tests that we had was [that] I didn't think that consumers would pay more. And if you asked for [consumers to pay more]... it would hurt demand. If you hurt demand, it would be difficult to get scale…. So we actually did test it. And what's interesting is that we confirmed that consumers generally don't want to pay with money for green, but they were willing to pay with time. In other words, if a regular Uber is a five-minute ETA, they would wait nine or ten minutes for an EV. They would be willing to trade off their time. And one thing that you find in our marketplace is there's a direct correlation for the vast majority of the population between how much you pay for a trip, paying with dollars and paying for time…. Different consumers have different price elasticities for their time. And that relationship kind of broke down with EVs for the first time. So that gave us an

> opening, because that told us that in the early days, when we had less liquidity with EVs and higher ETAs as a result, that was not going to be a blocker to getting the flywheel working.

These insights would inform Uber's later product decisions: If riders were not willing to bear a significant price premium for EVs, then the company would need to structure its pricing, matching, and product design so that electrification could scale without relying on riders to subsidize it directly.

London served as a catalyst for the company on multiple fronts. Uber's sustainability decisions built goodwill with the city's stakeholders and established a model for engaging policymakers in other cities. Uber also proved that a city-scale electrification fund could unlock EV adoption, demonstrated the importance of joint public and private investment in EV charging, and surfaced critical behavioral insights about how riders valued sustainable trips in practice.

THE 2020 GLOBAL COMMITMENT: A BOLD SUSTAINABILITY TARGET

In September 2020, amidst the growing success of electrification in London, Chris Hook, Uber's former head of global sustainability strategy, met with Uber's global leadership to evaluate rolling out similar programs in other large cities across the world. It was an ambitious goal that could differentiate Uber's product offering from competitors and align with emerging government initiatives around the world. Hook recalled, "we wanted to think about [launching a similar program] in all of the major cities across the world where there's a pathway to a full electric future."

However, to be successful, the initiative would require a significant global capital and operational resource commitment and careful coordination among Uber's leadership teams in policy, operations, product, and communications. By this point, more leaders inside the company saw sustainability as closely tied to Uber's core business and long-term license to operate. Macdonald reflected on the strategic framing:

> We've had our reputational peaks and valleys. There's been this broader societal question of companies' roles in societies and what issues should companies care about and weigh in on and make part of their sort of core DNA versus just delivering on their core mission. For us, the big issues that are both core to our business but also have broad societal impact are [1] safety and transportation safety on the platform; [2] earner well-being… the vast majority [of earners] are independent contractors, people who earn a living on our platform, close to 8.25 million at this point, and [3] we're one of the largest transportation and logistics companies in the world. Our environmental footprint matters. Our sustainability approach matters…. These are topics we feel like really matter for the world and also really matter for our core business and are aligned to our mission. These are topics we want to lean on.

The sustainability commitment did not emerge from a single team. Policy leaders had seen the power of working collaboratively with regulators in London. The operations team had watched drivers' early transition to EVs and heard their concerns firsthand. Product leaders were beginning to imagine how sustainability could be woven into the core rider and driver experiences, rather than treated as a side feature. Communications leaders Hazelbaker and Brooke Anderson, head of

product communications, saw an opportunity to rebuild trust and reposition Uber as a constructive partner on climate change.

In parallel, the COVID-19 pandemic created a unique window for the company to contemplate strategic issues. Ride volumes had dropped dramatically, and the company was reassessing its long-term strategy and societal role. For the sustainability advocates inside Uber, COVID served as both a challenge and a catalyst for change. Anderson reflected:

> We had a moment in time with COVID. We were having those discussions on how do we take what has been a successful early case study in London and combine it with other ribbons of momentum and this opportunity [where] we think we can be part of the solution and [have] a natural connection to the issue of sustainability.

The crisis also allowed leaders to ask bigger questions about the future of mobility and Uber's place within it, pushing them toward a bolder, more integrated vision rather than a series of disconnected pilots. Through months of internal debates, trade-off discussions, and cross-functional working sessions, a shared comprehensive strategy began to take shape within the company.

First, Uber would invest approximately $800 million globally to help drivers transition to EVs through subsidies and to enhance charging infrastructure, recognizing that meaningful financial support was essential to overcoming upfront costs and accelerating EV adoption. Second, Uber would build sustainability directly into its products, starting with an expanded Uber Green, so that lower-emission choices became part of the core rider and driver experience rather than a marketing feature. Third, Uber would broaden multimodal, car-free options by continuing to integrate bikes, scooters, and public transit (e.g., showing bus and rail system routes in the app, and supporting first- and last-mile connections), giving riders easier alternatives to private car trips. Fourth, Uber committed to transparent, regional reporting of emissions and progress toward its goals, using consistent, quantitative disclosure to build credibility and keep teams accountable over the long term.[6] Internal leaders recognized the ambitiousness of the package. Macdonald noted:

> We put out a $800 million number that we would commit to the transition in those early days…. It was a large number that would get us started, not perfectly modeled and not something we figured would get you all the way to 100 percent transitioned globally, which for obvious reasons is going to actually be tens of billions, if not more than that. But really, this was a mix of art and science. And for us, it was more about putting a bold stake in the ground than perfectly modeling exactly what we thought it would cost…. There was no math you could do up front to A) convince yourself that this was going to be ROI positive on any reasonable modeling horizon, B) predict exactly when the economic equation would work without subsidization, and C) to know what the total investment was going to need to be to get to 100 percent zero emissions. And so as opposed to trying to perfectly model that, it was more of a "what you need to believe" type of exercise.

[6] "Driving a Green Recovery," Uber press release, September 8, 2020, https://www.uber.com/newsroom/driving-a-green-recovery/.

Board Involvement and Alignment

Khosrowshahi and his team met with both the global and U.K. boards to discuss the company's electrification efforts. There were strategic discussions regarding the meaningful financial commitment the company wanted to pledge to accelerate worldwide EV adoption for its rider base. At the time of these discussions, the company had not yet reached profitability, creating tension around how the financial commitment fit within its broader financial position. Khosrowshahi recalled the challenges:

> The discussions that we had with our board were very constructive, and the board has been incredibly supportive of our move into EVs. The discussion that we had with the board was actually at a higher strategic level…. For us, the big push with the board was the $800 million in commitments that we made, the numerical commitments. That took a little bit of work, but as long as I was able to deliver moving the company into profitability and improving our profit margin, the board was willing to make that investment. It was a significant investment because it fit overall with our profitability path, but then more importantly, it was part of the strategic alignment on where we will engage with our stakeholders and where we're going to engage as it relates to social responsibility. And having that clarity and it being a strategic discussion versus a tactical discussion was very, very useful with the board.

Hazelbaker, believed the leadership team made it clear to the board that the electrification effort was a sustained, multiyear commitment. With over 4 million drivers on the platform at the time, the board grasped the potential positive societal impact the organization could achieve. She remarked:

> I think that [tension with the board] quickly dissipated once the board understood that this was not going to be a flash-in-the-pan idea for us…. Once they saw what we were trying to do and were kind of bought into the plan, they were pretty quick [to jump] on board…. Dara says "climate is a team sport." He's really drilled that into our head, which is like even Uber at our size and scale, 10,000 cities, 75 countries, 8 million drivers on the platform [in 2025], we actually can't tackle this alone, right? We need other industry partners. We need auto manufacturers, we need our drivers, we need our customers to believe in this…. What boards need to recognize about taking on an issue of this sort is that you have to be willing to lead with substance for a long period of time. This is not something that you can pick up and put down as the winds change.

Immediate Expansion

Following the success of the London initiative, Uber's sustainability leaders focused on launching similar electrification programs in six other cities in Europe—large European municipalities where they could concentrate their efforts. A number of those locations had many of the same key dynamics as London: a growing (although not fully built out) charging infrastructure base, supportive drivers and consumers, and a government ecosystem which was in favor of the transition. Macdonald continued:

> We felt like these were the markets [where] this mattered, where consumers wanted it, where the policy infrastructure was there, where the charging infrastructure was there, where there was enough OEM vehicle supply to make that transition. And I think it's proved to be right. A lot of our efforts in the Spark 7 [cities in Europe] have been successful. We have more momentum in those markets than almost any other market globally, and consumers are making the switch. And the great, great news is the economic equation for drivers on total cost of ownership has crossed into positive.

Uber's Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) team successfully launched Clean Air plans in Paris and Amsterdam, two of the largest cities in Europe. The Dutch government had recently instituted a "Right to Charge" policy concurrent with the rollout, in which citizens with electric vehicles could request that municipalities install public chargers within 250 meters of their home. This provided Uber EV drivers with a publicly funded method of meeting their individualized, targeted charging needs. The cities with the highest rates of EV adoption were unsurprisingly the cities that had policies that most strongly supported electrification. By 2025, over 40 percent of kilometers driven on Uber's platforms in Amsterdam and London were electric, compared with roughly 25 percent in the other Spark Seven European cities. Vice President of Mobility EMEA Anabel Diaz Calderon stated, "It was more than a brand lift. [We needed] a way of educating and getting demand specifically for drivers deciding to go electric…. They're driving seven to ten times more kilometers than the average individual."

Announcing a Zero-Emission Platform

In September 2020, Khosrowshahi publicly announced the company's initial $800 million commitment and goal:

> Uber is committing to become a zero-emission mobility platform by 2040, with 100% of rides taking place in zero-emission vehicles, on public transit, or with micromobility. We're also setting an earlier goal to have 100% of rides take place in electric vehicles (EVs) in U.S., Canadian, and European cities by 2030…. In addition to our platform goals, we're also committed to reaching net-zero emissions from our corporate operations by 2030. All told, hitting these goals would put us a decade ahead of Paris Climate Agreement targets.[7]

The announcement framed climate as one of Uber's central strategic priorities and positioned the company as a potential leader in the decarbonization of urban transport. Anderson emphasized that the commitment had to be backed by real product changes and clear communication about consumer trends:

> And I think we put in a lot of effort over the years, but it started with that commitment to articulating where our consumers' heads are when it comes to sustainability. And increasingly, we've seen study after study…. Consumers are starting to make decisions based on the sustainability of the products that they choose. And so they're wanting to purchase products that are more sustainable…. For us, we saw an

[7] "Driving a Green Recovery," Uber press release, September 8, 2020, https://www.uber.com/newsroom/driving-a-green-recovery/.

> opportunity. We'd better start building more sustainable products and making that a specific focus.

The 2020 announcement marked a turning point. Uber's experiences in London had shown that a collaborative approach with the government, backed by real investment, could accelerate electrification. The global commitment extended that logic worldwide, setting ambitious, time-bound goals, aligning the board and executive team, and formally embedding sustainability into Uber's core strategy and product roadmap.

BUILDING THE FLYWHEEL: ACCELERATING SUSTAINABILITY ADOPTION

As Uber moved from announcing its global zero-emission ambition to executing against it, a central challenge emerged: building a self-reinforcing system of behavior change that could accelerate EV adoption in time to hit the company's bold sustainability targets. The experience in London had demonstrated that aligned policy and financial incentives could spark initial momentum, but lasting electrification required something deeper—a flywheel that linked economics, marketplace dynamics, product design, regulatory goodwill, and brand perception into a reinforcing loop. Khosrowshahi acknowledged, "People trying to do the right thing can act as a catalyst for activity, but ultimately, it runs out of steam unless you have an economic flywheel to drive change at scale."

Uber's leadership understood that EV adoption could not rely on values-driven behavior by consumers. The transition would scale only when EVs made economic sense for drivers, delivered consistently good experiences for both drivers and riders, and signaled credible intentions and goal alignment to regulators. Long-term electrification depended on EV unit economics approaching or surpassing those of ICE vehicles. Khosrowshahi reflected:

> We had a fair amount of confidence that long term you could get to TCO [total cost of ownership] neutral… meaning the total cost of ownership of an EV would eventually be lower than ICE vehicles. But there was a five- to seven-year time period for the economies of scale to kick in, which is why we had to bridge it.

Bridging this gap required OEM investment to bring down EV purchase prices, charging infrastructure expansion to support EV drivers, and company-provided incentives, such as the purchase and charging discounts provided in London. Once these forces compounded, lower costs could accelerate adoption, which would further attract OEM attention and infrastructure buildout, setting up the economic flywheel. The challenge was how to "start it." Chief Product Officer Sachin Kansal noted:

> If you go back to the initial days of Uber, you had to create density on the supply side [of drivers], and then you create density on the demand side [of riders], and keep going until it becomes a giant flywheel, because now you've created density on both sides. But the cold start problem is a big problem. If you think of our electrification and [Uber Green], it's kind of a microcosm of that same problem. You have to create enough density of electric cars… and you have to create enough demand so that there is a bit of a flywheel, but it takes time. And to crank that wheel from a cold start, you have to actually contribute.

In Kansal's view, those contributions came in the form of driver incentives, in-depth experiments, and innovative product features, all of which would help "spin" the flywheel.

Driver Adoption: Solving the Supply Side Problem

Perhaps most consequentially, Uber's team members spent significant time and effort working with drivers to motivate their move to EVs. Many leaders felt that in a marketplace business like Uber, the supply side of drivers would set the pace of early-stage adoption. They soon realized that, beyond the quantitative incentives provided, there would need to be a meaningful educational component to stimulate change. Hook, the global sustainability lead, remarked, "It was less about making the math work and more about communicating to drivers the benefits of owning an electric vehicle. It was a communication problem."

Charging anxiety was perhaps the most commonly voiced concern for drivers, in both in-person interviews and surveys. Whereas an ICE vehicle could be refueled in two minutes, it often took 30 to 45 minutes for EVs to be recharged. Khosrowshahi explained:

> Drivers in particular were very sensitive of their time. Their time is money. We were able to use the funds to offset the higher upfront cost of moving over to EVs. But drivers were very, very nervous about how much time it [takes to] charge. Am I going to find a charger? Where is the charger going to be? So there was a lot of education and effort put into that part of the equation.

In 2022, Uber's product team responded by building a simple map of charging stations within Uber's driver application for select cities. Charging locations were available in other mobile map applications such as Google Maps, but many drivers were not using those applications very frequently. After Uber launched the feature, adoption increased steadily, with tens of thousands of drivers eventually using the map functionality daily.

Additionally, the team released a battery-aware matching feature, which monitored a driver's real-time battery level and automatically routed shorter, nearby trips to low-battery drivers. This small but powerful change directly reduced range anxiety by alleviating drivers' fears of being sent on long trips that might leave them stranded or force an unplanned charging stop, and made EV driving more predictable and economically reliable.

There were additional core knowledge gaps and areas of confusion within Uber's broader driver base, as many drivers lacked a basic understanding of EVs. Kansal reflected on the drivers' concerns:

> We went and talked to a lot of drivers who were driving their gas vehicles and asked them, hey, have you considered an EV? [They told us] "yeah, we've thought about an EV." And why haven't you gotten an EV? They said, "there's just a lot of confusion about it." [They told us] "We don't know which EV to get. We don't even know how to evaluate an EV… the prices are higher than gas vehicles…. What are the various specs that should matter to us when it comes to buying an EV?" So there was just a lot of general anxiety and uncertainty and confusion about the basics of driving an EV.

In response, Uber created an EV Hub within its driver-facing application, which served as a central information repository for drivers about EVs and EV models available for purchase in their region. It contained relatively basic information, but the information from a trusted source helped remove driver confusion and ultimately helped spur adoption. The application also included TCO data provided by the company's partners, which included the initial purchase price as well as ongoing maintenance and charging costs, as well as dealership locations to purchase the vehicles. Drivers quickly began to realize that they could potentially save money over a four- to five-year time period by owning an EV, which was an eye-opening realization.

Uber leaders also used the power of social proof to drive adoption to electric vehicles. The company established an EV Ambassador program for selected drivers to actively evangelize the benefits of EV ownership to fellow drivers. Hook remarked, "they were better spokespeople than [Uber's management team] were." Additionally, Uber established an EV Mentor program to match new EV drivers with experienced EV drivers who could coach the newcomers and guide them through the EV adoption process.

Rider Experience: Uber Green & the EV Preference

As Uber's EV supply increased, Kansal and his team turned to the rider experience to help reinforce the flywheel. The team released an Emissions Savings feature that made a rider's sustainability tangible by showing them the CO_2 avoided from each EV trip, and cumulatively across their rides, creating a simple in-application feedback loop that rewarded greener choices. Riders could also set an EV preference, subtly shifting demand toward electric cars and improving utilization for EV drivers.

To build emotional connection, Uber also introduced EV pop-up experiences that put riders into unique vehicles like Rivians or Lotus EVs and incorporated green, leafy visual cues across the app to make sustainable choices feel intuitive and positive. The emissions tracking extended beyond car trips as well, including Lime scooter rides and other electric micromobility options booked through the Uber app.

Together, these features wove sustainability directly into the rider journey, nudging demand toward EVs and strengthening the marketplace flywheel. Kansal remarked:

> If you have all those features, you get more EV riders. If you have more EV riders, you'll create more EV earnings. If you create more EV earnings, you're going to get more EV drivers…. As the density of cars increases, each of the riders is going to have a better experience….That virality is the best way to generate more EV drivers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Uber Go Get Zero Event Slides, "Flywheel Effect"

Source: Screenshot from Uber Go Get Zero event background slides (31 min 40 sec) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiGupvjKVPk.

What had originally begun as a set of small, volunteer-led experiments testing sustainable product features had evolved into a large, dedicated sustainability product team shipping major features, supported by Uber's $800 million commitment and ambitious climate targets. Sustainability was no longer an add-on; it had become a core product pillar. Kansal reflected:

> [In the past,] sustainability impacted our product strategy. But now we are at a point where our product strategy is actually impacting our sustainability strategy. So we have taken what was mostly policy and doing good and turned it into something that our products are built around. And I would say that has been a massive change.

While the growing sophistication of Uber's sustainability product organization helped accelerate the electrification flywheel, implementing these initiatives consistently across global markets proved uneven due to differences in regulatory frameworks and local market dynamics.

SCALING CHALLENGES: GLOBAL VISION, LOCAL STRATEGY

As London and Amsterdam demonstrated, the success of the electrification initiatives could vary meaningfully by region based on regulatory or market factors. Latin America, a region where many countries had made limited investment in charging infrastructure and offered minimal subsidies for EV purchases, saw a flood of low-cost Chinese EV imports, which meaningfully reduced upfront purchase costs and led to accelerated adoption. Rebecca Tinucci, Uber's former head of electrification and sustainability and current CEO of Uber Freight, remarked:

> My belief around sustainability is that the goal has to be that whatever it is, it is the better choice for the consumer, or in our case, the driver too… and as soon as you

> get to that, the movement towards the sustainable option starts to organically accelerate. Lat-Am is beating every other region, but we're starting from a very low base. But what's cool is that it's very organic. Some of the other regions, China being the example, absolutely started with government subsidies.

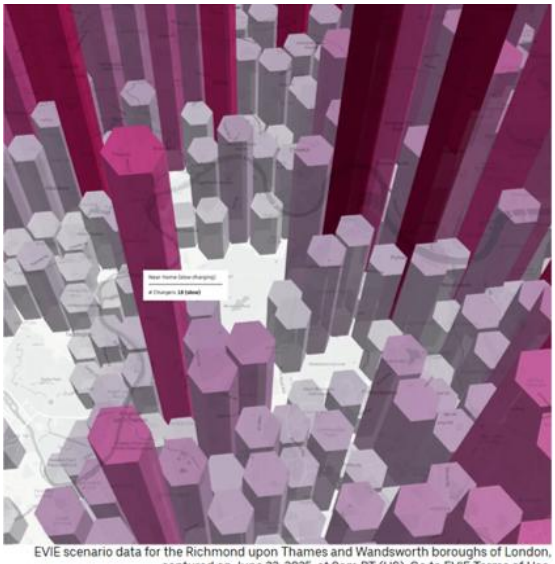
Local regulatory differences played a role as well. As the company rolled out programs in key U.S. cities, New York established a vehicle for hire cap on new licenses, but allowed EVs to come onto the platform. As a result, electrification became not only a sustainability initiative but a strategic growth lever, allowing Uber to expand its active fleet through EV adoption even as overall vehicle supply was constrained.

In June 2025, Uber launched EVIE, Uber's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Estimator. The product was an interactive heatmap that used real-world data from Uber drivers and trips to generate city heatmaps showing charging demand from EV rideshare drivers (see Figure 2). Leaders believed that the publicly available dataset could help local governments and businesses identify ideal locations for adding additional charging infrastructure. The platform also included insights regarding which types of chargers (slow or fast-charging) could best serve drivers in specific locations.

Uber's growing data, operational experience, and city-level insights reshaped its relationship with local governments. By selectively sharing data on travel patterns, emissions, and infrastructure needs, Uber increasingly positioned itself as a constructive partner in urban mobility planning, shifting from a perceived disruptor to a collaborator capable of helping cities achieve their own sustainability goals. Macdonald opined:

> Uber is a business that's regulated at the city, state/province, and national level on all sorts of issues… and we have a lot of stakeholders in government, we have a lot of stakeholders in the media, thought leaders, and sustainability is a topic that matters to those people deeply as well…. So being a good partner and being a good citizen means aligning your interests [and] the interests of the broader populace to the government. Leading the way on sustainability has been part of that.

Figure 2 - EVIE Rendering of Charging Usage



Source: Uber Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Estimator, https://www.uber.com/us/en/about/sustainability/evie/.

GO GET ZERO: TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

By 2023, Uber's sustainability work had matured from an early set of policy commitments and market experiments into a coordinated, cross-functional strategy. Yet the company's leadership recognized a lingering challenge: Even with funding, incentives, and a growing portfolio of EV-focused product features, progress could still drift without a company-wide forcing mechanism. What Uber needed was a way to align every team, every region, and every year around measurable delivery. The solution became Go Get Zero: an annual, global sustainability product showcase that reframed Uber's climate commitments as a recurring, public deadline.

Go Get Zero was not conceived just as a PR event. Instead, it served as a deadline and an organizing function for the entire company, especially the product team. In addition, policy leads, marketing, operations, and regional markets all oriented around the same milestone, driving intense cycles of prioritization and execution. As Kansal explained, the dynamic shifted the moment the event was announced:

> It may be a corporate event, it may be a feel-good event, it may be a policy-oriented event, but we made this a product-oriented event. I'll be honest, that put a lot of pressure on my team, and I [said], okay, we have… a deadline. I'm going to get up on stage, I'm going to talk about all these product features we are building. And I always think in product development, deadlines are your best friends. And now I would say that has become an extremely critical part of our overall sustainability strategy.

Go Get Zero operationalized Uber's belief that credibility comes from outcomes, not intentions. Since 2020, Uber had made their sustainability metrics public even when progress was uneven, a move that helped rebuild trust after years of strained government relationships. Jill Hazelbaker viewed sustainability as a means of reintroducing Uber to policymakers and demonstrating that

the company was willing to invest in shared goals rather than resist regulation. The transparency that underpinned this shift was reinforced through Go Get Zero. Leaders knew that city-level EV progress, rider emissions data, and product achievements would not just be published; they would be presented. Every team understood that their work would be visible to regulators, drivers, riders, investors, and the press. This visibility created organizational discipline, tightening the loop between commitment and delivery.

Externally, Go Get Zero also helped Uber attract and elevate partnerships. The company could not manufacture vehicles, deploy charging stations, or close the TCO gap alone. Uber needed support from automakers, charging networks, utilities, city governments, NGOs, and climate groups. Partnerships had been essential from the start, from OEM deals that improved vehicle affordability, to charging integrations that gave drivers access to real-time infrastructure data, to policy collaborations that unlocked exemptions, incentives, or congestion-pricing structures. The Go Get Zero event became a showcase not just of Uber's progress, but of its ecosystem. For partners, being featured signaled credibility and momentum. For Uber, the event highlighted that electrification at global scale required collective action, not corporate self-sufficiency.

Uber's electrification strategy did not remain confined to its core rides business. Success in EV adoption catalyzed a broader, company-wide integration of sustainability across the platform. The company invested in Uber Eats through its Earthshot partnership and related programs to address packaging waste at scale. By 2024, Uber Eats supported over 1 million merchants globally, each fulfilling orders that typically required five to ten packaging items, many of them historically non-recyclable. In response, Uber launched a global sustainable packaging marketplace for restaurants across the European Union and United Kingdom. The company also piloted alternative materials, including reusable packaging with DeliverZero, and invested $1 million in Paris to help merchants adopt more sustainable options such as Notpla's seaweed-based packaging, Releaf's leaf-made bags, and iamplasticfree's straws made from agricultural sugar byproducts.[8] In parallel, sustainability efforts expanded into micromobility, with Uber's shared fleets, including scooters, electric mopeds, and even boats in select cities, designed to be electric by default. Together, these initiatives reflected Uber's willingness to engage beyond its traditional core competencies, leveraging its scale and influence to remove barriers that otherwise would have slowed progress toward its sustainability goals.

By mid-2025, Uber had facilitated over 500 million cumulative zero-emission trips globally since 2021, reaching over 286,000 monthly active EV drivers on the platform (see Exhibits 1 and 2). EV drivers completed 16.8 percent of all on-trip miles in Europe and 9.5 percent of all on-trip miles in Canada and the U.S. (see Exhibit 3). In cities like London, Vancouver, and Amsterdam, where thoughtful policies, industry investment, and strong charging networks align, more than 1 in every 3 miles on Uber were now electric.[9] Each year's announcements, including charging integrations, EV Hub upgrades, EV-only products, AI tools, and sustainable packaging, showcased not just product innovation but organizational alignment. In competitive markets like London, sustainability even became a differentiator, not only against Bolt and minicab operators, but against the city's popular black cabs. What began as a sustainability milestone evolved into a

[8] Dara Khosrowshahi, "Making sustainability the better choice," Uber Newsroom, October 8, 2024, https://www.uber.com/newsroom/gogetzero-2024/.

[9] "Uber's Electrification Update," Uber press release, September 2025, https://www.uber.com/us/en/about/reports/sustainability-report/.

company-wide operating ritual that united product development, partnerships, and public accountability.

DRIVING FORWARD

Looking toward the future, Khosrowshahi and his team faced an increasingly uncertain global policy environment. The termination in late 2025 of all federal EV subsidies in the United States, which had originally spurred adoption in the country, would likely increase near-term EV purchase costs. At the same time, global momentum behind electrification appeared to be softening, with several governments scaling back EV subsidies, major automakers tempering prior electrification commitments, and regulatory timelines for tightening CO_2 emissions standards becoming more fluid. Tinucci, who previously served as the company's global head of electrification and sustainability, remarked:

> The first thing is making sure we're really understanding how drivers will be impacted…. In this moment when [it] just got more expensive for us to drive EVs…this [total cost of ownership] gap widens…. What can we do at this moment to take our budget and our time and our resources and put it towards things that we think are uniquely able to drive behavior…. We're basically trying to think through what are really unique ways that Uber can play in this ecosystem, specifically here in the U.S., because we're not seeing the same thing in other regions, but specifically here in the U.S. to keep driving forward.

As part of its broader response, Uber's leadership team evaluated new ways to reduce ongoing driver costs, with a particular focus on expanding access to charging infrastructure for high-mileage drivers. The company partnered with various stakeholders, including the C40 coalition of world mayors, to accelerate infrastructure deployment. Since 2021, Uber had regularly surveyed drivers about their willingness to transition to EVs. By 2025, for the first time, access to charging had overtaken vehicle cost as the primary barrier to electrification among drivers in the U.S. and U.K.

Uber remained focused on preserving strategic direction while adjusting the pace and sequencing of execution both globally and locally to reflect political and economic realities. The company emphasized transparency in communicating both progress and constraints, acknowledging that while substantial gains had been made, external roadblocks would continue to influence the speed and feasibility of electrification in key markets. Amid the changing subsidy landscape, Uber restructured its incentive strategy, moving away from ongoing trip-level incentives for existing EV drivers and launching a new $4,000 EV driver grant in California, New York City, Massachusetts, and Colorado. These geographies were deliberately selected because they continued to offer state-level vehicle incentives that could be paired with Uber's funding, helping sustain EV adoption in key markets despite the loss of federal support.

Launching an Autonomous Future

Khosrowshahi and Macdonald believed the rise of autonomous vehicles (AVs) would not only accelerate the organization's sustainability efforts, but magnify already pressing infrastructure capacity issues. Essentially all of the AVs going online globally, whether in the testing or commercialization phase, were EVs. However, this technology shift was even less in the

company's control, given the significant regulatory barriers to broad adoption and high vehicle costs. Macdonald observed:

> For us, in cities where we are live with scaled AVs like Austin, Texas, that has been by far the fastest driver of electrifying our platform in those markets because we're adding not only hundreds of vehicles, but autonomous vehicles are going to run 20 hours a day, seven days a week. So adding an AV is the equivalent of adding like six or seven human drivers to our platform in terms of hours spent. Translate that to miles driven, translate that to emissions or emissions saved if you're electric. I think AVs are going to have a massive impact, not just on our platform, but in the world…. The knock-on effect of that is there is going to be a massive increase in the need for industrial level charging capacity.

Khosrowshahi also validated the near-term potential for AVs with Uber's recent partnership with Waymo in Austin, TX. He believed AVs had the potential to reshape Uber's business, dramatically expanding ridership and improving sustainability. He concluded:

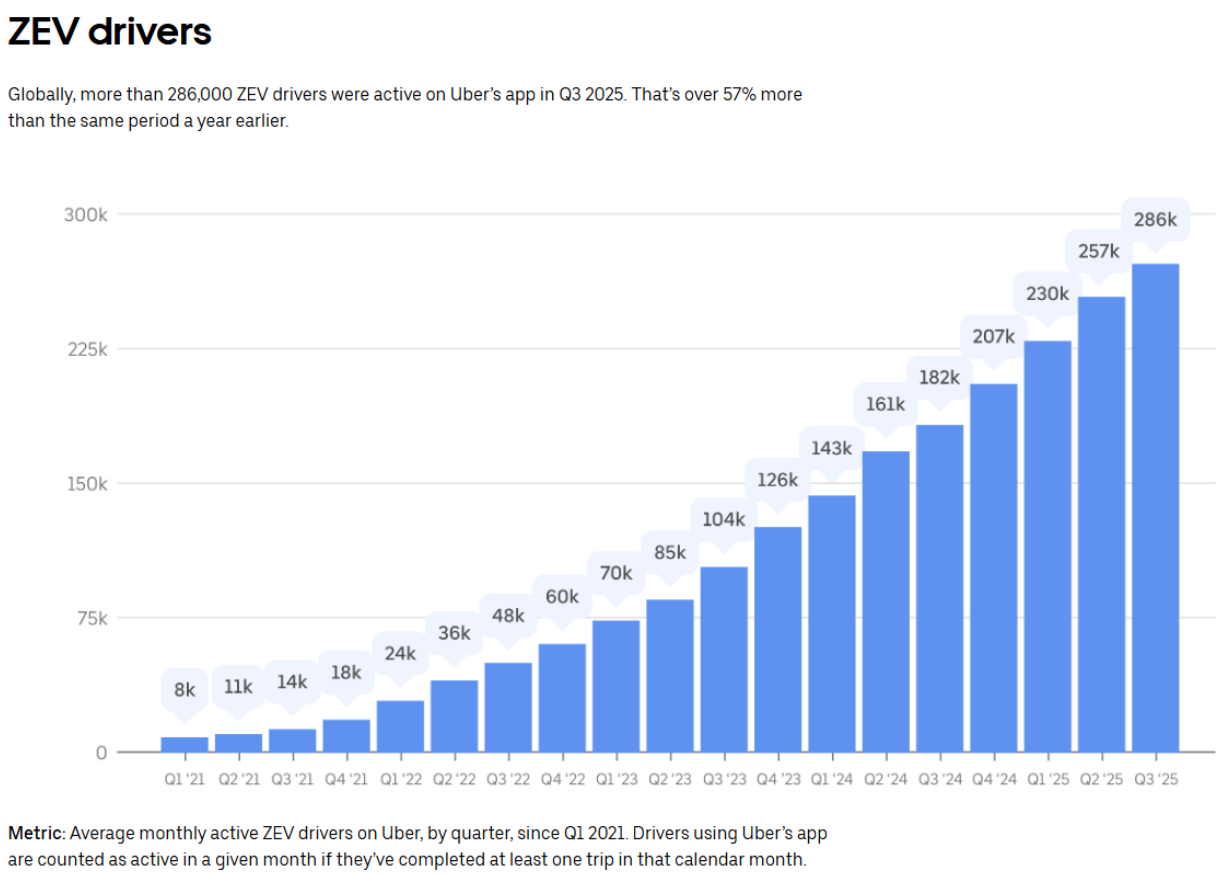
> In Austin, since we have launched with Waymo, the share of EV Uber trips in the city has gone up by 50 percent....We say we believe in a future that is electric, autonomous, and shared [to reduce] congestion. I have the hypothesis that because it's so much safer, autonomous is going to potentially increase the number of vehicles on the road, so it becomes really important to share those vehicles as well. Electric autonomous [vehicles] have been the perfect partner for us.

Conclusion

What began as a potentially damaging policy setback in London had evolved into a global strategy anchored in economic incentives, stakeholder coordination, product innovation, and bold public commitments. Khosrowshahi's strong leadership and role in championing sustainability amid high uncertainty was central to this transformation. In concert with his board, Khosrowshahi committed hundreds of millions of dollars in capital, set a strategic direction towards global sustainability and electrification, and moved forward without a complete data set or full visibility into long-term risks—an approach that many companies would struggle to tolerate or approve. Uber's newfound willingness to partner with governments and make transparent long-term bets, even without guaranteed outcomes, accelerated sustainable innovation across the company.

By investing early in driver incentives, building a self-reinforcing flywheel, and embedding sustainability into the core product experience, Khosrowshahi and his team saw the company's sustainability efforts morph from a secondary concern to a key driver of transformational growth. The company had established the most widely available on-demand EV platform in the world, with Uber drivers in many regions transitioning to EVs at rates faster than the general population. Uber's journey offered a blueprint for other organizations seeking to successfully launch and sustain lasting sustainability initiatives.

Exhibit 1
Uber Zero Emission Vehicle Driver Growth

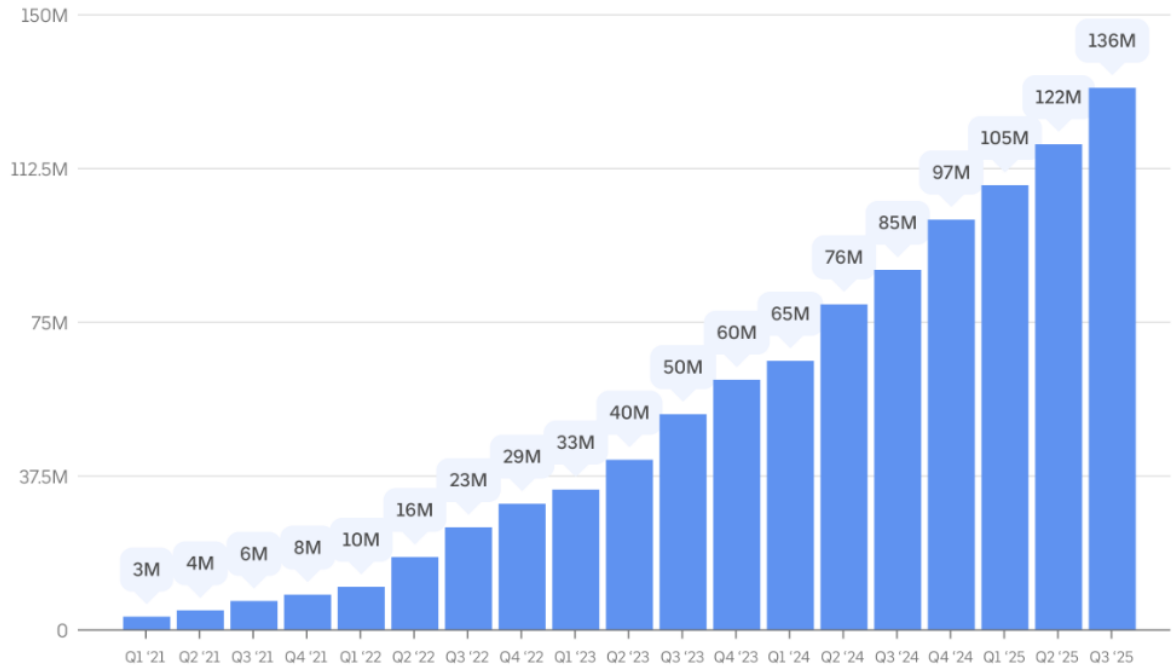


Source: Uber company website, https://www.uber.com/gb/en/about/reports/sustainability-report/.

Exhibit 2
Uber Zero Emission Trips Growth

ZEV trips

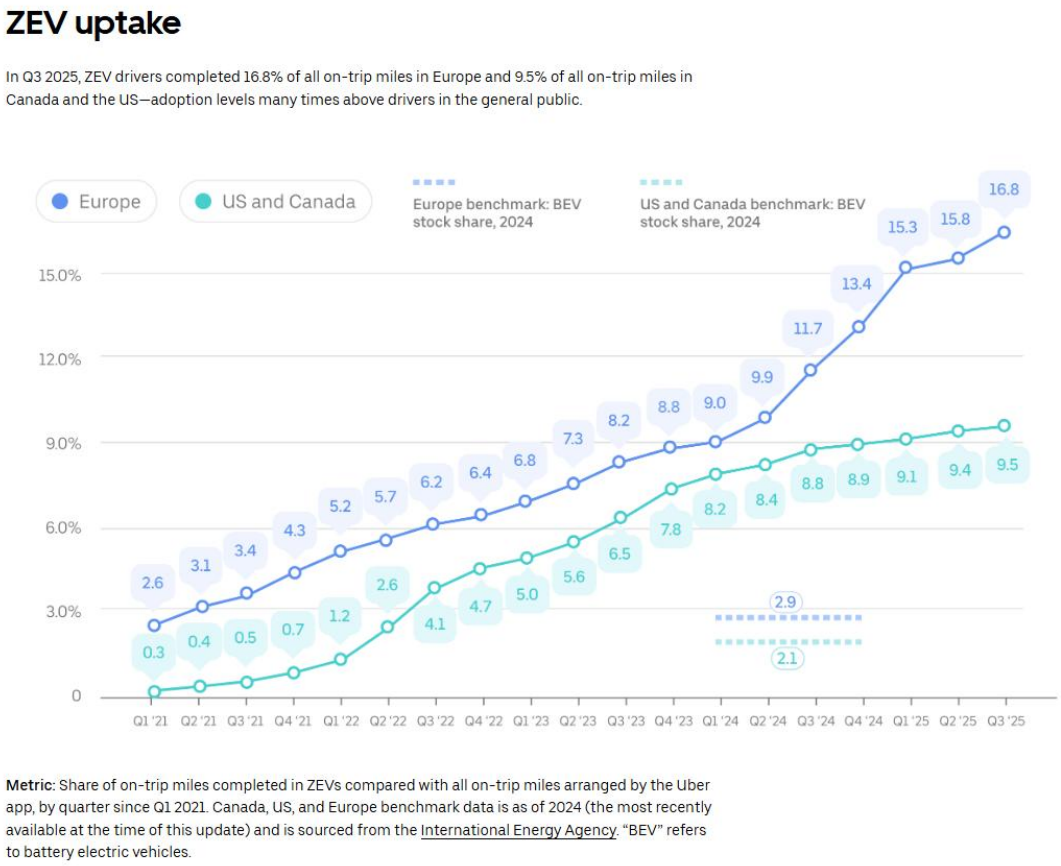
In Q3 2025, ZEV drivers completed over 136 million trips using Uber, globally. That's more than 17 ZEV trips on Uber every second, on average. The Q3 2025 total is 60% more than the number of ZEV trips completed on Uber during the same period a year earlier.



Metric: Number of trips arranged on the Uber app and fulfilled by ZEV drivers, by quarter since Q1 2021.

Source: Uber company website, https://www.uber.com/gb/en/about/reports/sustainability-report/.

Exhibit 3
Uber Zero Emission Miles Growth



Source: Uber company website, https://www.uber.com/gb/en/about/reports/sustainability-report/.