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## In The Driver's Seat Of The Mean Green Mini Machine

by Andrea Aurichio | [4 Comments](#)



Test drivers Ann LaWall and Sherly Heather paid their own insurance and are happily participating in the study on electric car usage. *Photos by Andrea Aurichio*

**Southampton** - "I just plug it in, charge it, and go," Ann LaWall said. She was talking about her new car, not her cell phone, as she waxed poetic about her Green Mini. That is green as in energy conservation. The battery operated electric car comes in other colors too.

The ultimate alternative to a gas guzzling SUV, the diminutive retro style car, runs on a battery. There are seven of them in town thanks to a program sponsored by BMW. Five town employees and two members of the Southampton Business Alliance (SBA) have gamely agreed to participate in a trial program made possible by local BMW dealer Michael Caruso. The program is aimed at raising public awareness as it tests the prototype's performance.

Caruso is a member of the Business Alliance as well as a member of the town's Committee for a Sustainable Southampton or The Green Committee as it is more frequently referred to.

The cars have an unmistakable logo on the "gas" cap which actually

covers the electrical outlet where you plug the car in to charge it up. The logo is a large two pronged yellow plug. You can plug it in anywhere using an outlet in your garage or an exterior outlet if you do not have a garage. It is safe to keep the car plugged in when it rains.

"I plug it in when I get home at night," LaWall said, "then I plug it in when I get to work in the morning at 9 a.m. so it is charged up by the time I go out to lunch at 1 p.m. LaWall along with her fellow test drivers has had the car on the road for a week.

"I love it," said Sherly Heather, owner of Spring and Summer Activities, a pool shop in Hampton Bays. Heather is on the SBA's Board of Directors. "It's a fun car."

These cars go for a hefty \$48,000 but cost less than the equivalent fifty cents a gallon for gas when you put them on the road. The SBA decided to lease their vehicles. "We got two cars for \$500 a year," LaWall said. "We paid our own insurance."

Both women have plastered their car doors with magnetic signs promoting their belief in green as they tool around town. LaWall will increase her charging capability when BMW installs a 30 amp service at her office enabling her to charge the car's battery more rapidly. The cars are designed to go about 100 miles before the battery gives out. "It's ideal for local driving," Heather said as she pulled her car along LaWall's for a photo op promoting their use of the new lean green mini machine.

"People have been talking about electric cars for years," La Wall said, "its time has come. We need to go green because it makes sense for the economy and the environment." The car's battery recharges in four hours. Keep an eye out for the test drivers who may forget to plug their cars in. "The battery recharges while you drive," LaWall said clearly impressed with her new wheels.



Ann LaWall in her electric battery operated car. The prototype is being tested by town officials and members of SBA in a joint effort to emphasize the importance of going green.