# Startup To Build Electric Cars In OK

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OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Officials from companies based in Oklahoma and Georgia plan on Tuesday to discuss an agreement under which all-electric, street-legal, low-speed vehicles will be assembled and sold in Oklahoma.

The agreement between AMP Control Inc. of Piedmont and Wheego Electric Cars Inc. of Atlanta will be the focus of a news conference at the state Capitol. Under the deal, AMP Control will assemble the vehicles — which are manufactured by Wheego — at a plant in Piedmont, in Canadian County, just northwest of Oklahoma City.

AMP Control, a distributor of remote-controlled lawn mowers, also will have exclusive rights to sell the Wheego product line, including its Whip LSV, in Oklahoma.

It wasn't immediately clear Monday how large the assembly plant would be, when it might open or how many jobs would be created. AMP Control CEO Max Heckl said the company will start dealerships in Oklahoma City and Tulsa "and expand from there," although a news release on the agreement didn't include specifics.

Wheego CEO Mike McQuary told The Associated Press that the tax credits approved recently by the Legislature make Oklahoma an attractive marketplace in which to sell electric vehicles. He said the Wheego Whip LSV qualifies for a state tax credit of 50 percent of the purchase price of the vehicle, which is $18,995, as well as a $7,500 federal tax credit.

The state tax credit can be spread over five years.

"Where states are being that progressive, it's obviously going to get our attention," McQuary said. "Oklahomans historically have thought of their state in terms of oil and natural gas. We want to broaden that thinking to Oklahoma being a leader in all types of energy."

House Speaker Chris Benge, R-Tulsa, has been a proponent of alternative energy since assuming that post, and Democratic Gov. Brad Henry mostly supported those efforts, signing into law a bill that included tax credits for electric- and compressed natural gas-powered vehicles.

McQuary said he doesn't see natural gas-powered vehicles as competing with electric cars.

"You'll see an array of different transportation solutions to wean ourselves off of foreign oil and start to make positive environmental trends," he said. "I don't think a

single solution will emerge, but a lot of different technologies will.

"Anything that gives a consumer pause to not just go out and (buy) what they always have in the past is good."

The Wheego Whip can be driven on roads with posted speed limits of 35 mph or less. A Wheego highway-speed all-electric car is expected by next year, McQuary said.

The Whip is a fully loaded two-seat compact car that runs on sealed lead-acid batteries. It can be charged from a standard household outlet and will run about 40 miles on a single charge, McQuary said, adding that the 2010 model will be expected to run about 100 miles on a single charge.

McQuary said the Whip is assembled in Ontario, Calif. That plant will remain open, and he said Wheego eventually hopes to open a plant on the East Coast, in addition to the one in Oklahoma.

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