RANGEWAY / CASE STUDY

The Nevada Electric Highway

What happens when public capital builds infrastructure without an operator

May 2026

Prepared by Rangeway. Internal and partner reference.

Executive Summary

Nevada is the textbook example of what happens when public capital builds EV charging infrastructure without an operator behind it. The state launched the Nevada Electric Highway in 2015 with the goal of fast chargers every 50 miles on every major Nevada highway by 2020. Eleven years later, 29 stations had been built across the state, the program went defunct in June 2023, and as of the end of 2025 only 7 remained operational. A 24% survival rate.

This case study is not a critique of the public officials who launched the program. It is a strategic post-mortem. The Nevada Electric Highway proves a thesis Rangeway has built the company around: capital can build chargers, but only operators keep them running. A network without an operator is not a network. It is a depreciating asset that strands drivers.

Background: The Vision

In June 2015, Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval, the Governor's Office of Energy, and NV Energy announced the Nevada Electric Highway, calling it the first state-led electric highway in the country. The stated goal was to install DC fast chargers every 50 miles along Nevada's major corridors by 2020, beginning with US 95 between Las Vegas and Reno. The initial incentive budget was approximately $15 million, with funding pulled from NV Energy ratepayer programs, Nevada's renewable energy tax abatements, federal grants, and the Volkswagen environmental mitigation settlement that allocated Nevada roughly $22.5 million between 2017 and 2027.

Phase I deployed along US 95 with the first station opening at Eddie World in Beatty in February 2016, followed by Fox Peak in Fallon in October 2016, then Hawthorne, Tonopah, and Indian Springs. Phase II expanded onto US 93 starting with Panaca, and later extended to the US 50 corridor.

In 2021, Nevada's legislature added significant follow-on capital through Senate Bill 448, authorizing NV Energy to spend up to $100 million on EV charging infrastructure with a focus on underserved communities. The plan envisioned 120

charging sites and more than 1,800 ports. Simultaneously, the Nevada Department of Transportation received $38 million in federal NEVI funding under the bipartisan infrastructure law.

In total, Nevada had access to more than $130 million in dedicated EV charging capital across these programs.

> *The vision was right. The corridor coverage map matched what rural EV drivers actually need. The funding sources were real. What was missing was an operating model that survived past the ribbon-cutting.*

What Was Built

29 NEH-era stations were ultimately installed across the state. The Governor's Office of Energy officially wound down the program in June 2023 and transferred remaining EV infrastructure work to the Nevada Department of Transportation. NDOT, according to the Nevada Independent's March 2026 reporting, failed to obligate its $38 million in federal NEVI funds in time, and Congress subsequently reduced that allocation to roughly $25 million. Subsequent federal policy changes have made the remaining allocation difficult or impossible for states to deploy.

Scott Allison's January 2026 audit of all 29 sites surfaced the pattern that turns out to be the heart of this story. All 7 surviving sites share two things: they are on the EV Connect network, and they use ABB hardware. Every other operator's sites are dead. Shell was the largest operator on the network with 12 sites, all of which went offline when Shell exited third-party DC fast charging on April 30, 2025. Chargers from BTC Power, efacec, and Freewire are all defunct as well, though only Freewire has actually gone out of business. The other two vendors are still operating as companies. Their Nevada Electric Highway sites are dead anyway. The operator decided to walk away, and the hardware became a depreciating asset on a concrete pad.

The hardware deployed under the NEH followed a consistent pattern. Most stations were 50 kilowatt direct current fast chargers with CCS and CHAdeMO connectors, deployed in pairs, primarily at gas station hosts. Many were installed on the EV Connect network, requiring either the EV Connect app or an RFID card to initiate a charging session. None included NACS plugs, which were not yet standardized when the hardware was specified.

By 2026, that hardware is multiple generations behind current ultra-fast chargers, in a market where 350 kilowatt stations are now common and 400-800 kilowatt MCS deployments are in early commercial rollout.

The Field Report: May 2026

In early May 2026, EV reviewer Scott Allison drove a 1,182-mile loop from Las Vegas through Death Valley, up US 395 in California, across Nevada's full US 50 corridor from Reno to Ely, and back to Las Vegas via US 93. The trip was published as both a long-form blog post and a companion video. Allison documented every NEH-era charger along his route, whether it worked, what it cost, and what it felt like to depend on it.

The result is the most current public reliability survey of the Nevada Electric Highway. The findings:

Site	Corridor	Status (May 2026)	Notes
Beatty	US 95	Removed	Site existed; charger out of service and physically removed.
Fallon	US 50 / US 95	Offline	Out of service since 2021. Town of nearly 10,000 at a two-highway junction with no working fast charger.
Hawthorne	US 95	Status unverified	Phase I station; not on Scott's route.
Tonopah	US 95	Status unverified	Phase I station; not on Scott's route.
Indian Springs	US 95	Status unverified	Phase I station; not on Scott's route.
Silver Springs	US 50	Working	Two 50 kW chargers.
Middlegate Station	US 50	Offline	Off-grid solar plus battery installation. Hardware bricked after vendor Freewire's bankruptcy. Level 2 (5.7 kW) still functions.
Cold Springs Station	US 50	Working	Two 50 kW chargers, CCS plus CHAdeMO. Charging at $0.95/kWh.
Austin (Champs gas station)	US 50	Working	Two 50 kW chargers at $0.95/kWh.
Eureka	US 50	Offline	Two chargers, both offline. "I doubt if they'll ever be turned on again."
Ely (original NEH)	US 50 / US 93	Offline	Failed summer 2024. Function replaced when Tesla opened a V3 supercharger at end of 2024.
Panaca	US 93	Offline	First Phase II station; Lincoln County

Site	Corridor	Status (May 2026)	Notes
			Power District build.
Baker / Border Inn	US 50	Offline	Both fast chargers out of service. Gateway to Great Basin National Park.
Alamo	US 93	Partial	Single 50 kW charger. Offline more than a year; restored March 2026 with community advocacy.

Three observations from the field

First, the working sites work in spite of the network, not because of it. Cold Springs Station and Austin are functioning because their hosts have a commercial reason to keep them on. Silver Springs survives for similar reasons. The maintenance and operational accountability sits with the host, not the program.

Second, the survivor pricing is punitive. Allison paid $0.95 per kilowatt-hour at Cold Springs Station and Austin, which he describes as among the most expensive charging in the country. For a driver crossing a corridor with no alternatives, this is captive pricing on aging hardware. It is not what a healthy network looks like.

Third, the failure mode at Middlegate Station is the most instructive single data point. The off-grid solar and battery installation is technically interesting, conceptually well-located, and exactly the kind of build that should be the future of rural charging. It is offline because the hardware vendor, Freewire, went bankrupt and the unit cannot be serviced. What makes the data point sharper is that Freewire is the exception, not the rule. Most defunct Nevada Electric Highway sites are running hardware from vendors that are still in business. The hardware is not what killed those sites. The operator walking away is what killed them.

Diagnosis: Why It Failed

The Nevada Electric Highway did not fail because Nevada is too remote or because EVs were too rare. It failed because the program's operating model assumed that building chargers was the hard part. The structural issues:

No operator accountability

The NEH model was a build-and-host program. The state and NV Energy funded the hardware, host businesses (gas stations, casinos, county service stations) hosted the chargers, and a mix of third-party networks handled session management. No single entity was responsible for whether the chargers worked. When something broke, the host had little incentive to fix it and the original program no longer

existed to step in. This is the inverse of how a hospitality business operates. A hotel that loses its housekeeping department does not stay open.

No revenue model that pays for maintenance

Charging revenue at the deployed kilowatt levels does not generate enough margin to fund equipment maintenance, network connectivity fees, and replacement reserves, particularly at low-utilization rural sites. The original NEH stations were positioned as a public good, with several offering free charging for years per the host agreements. Free-charging public goods do not generate the cash flow needed to keep aging hardware operational.

Operator pullout risk

Freewire's bankruptcy bricked the Middlegate installation. The bigger pattern is bigger than bankruptcies. Shell's exit from third-party DC fast charging in April 2025 took 12 Nevada Electric Highway sites offline in a single corporate decision, even though the hardware on those sites is fine and the manufacturers are still in business. Networks built on operators who can decide to walk away are networks that can disappear overnight.

No experience layer to retain drivers

Even when the chargers work, there is nothing to do at most NEH sites except wait. The hosts that have thrived (Cold Springs Station, the Champs gas station in Austin) succeeded because they were already destinations. The chargers that sit in empty parking lots have no second product to fall back on when the primary product fails.

Program discontinuity

When the Governor's Office of Energy wound down the NEH in June 2023 and handed remaining work to NDOT, institutional continuity broke. The follow-on $100 million SB448 authorization has produced limited visible deployment. Federal NEVI funds went partially unspent, and policy changes at the federal level have since made the remaining allocation difficult or impossible for states to deploy. Capital allocated is not the same as infrastructure delivered.

Strategic Implications for Rangeway

Five things Nevada teaches us about the network we are building.

1. The operator is the product

Public capital can fund chargers. It cannot fund the daily commitment to keeping them online, clean, safe, and worth stopping at. Rangeway exists because that commitment is the actual product. Hardware is a component. The operator is the brand. We think like hotel operators, not utility companies, because Nevada is what happens when you think like a utility.

2. Hospitality is the moat

On Allison's route, the chargers that survived are co-located with destinations that have their own reason to exist. Cold Springs Station has a restaurant. Austin's Champs has a gift shop. Middlegate has the Monster Burger. Drivers gravitate toward places where the stop itself is worth making, even when the charger is slow and expensive. The Rangeway driver's lounge concept at Waystations and Basecamps is the structural answer to this finding, and the Summit format is the same insight extended to overnight stays.

3. Reliability is a corridor property, not a site property

Allison rejected the direct 215-mile US 95 route from Las Vegas and added 967 miles of detour because of how unreliable the corridor was overall. EV drivers route at the corridor level, not the site level. A Rangeway location does not just have to work for the driver pulling in. It has to work for the driver three sites back deciding whether to take that route at all. This is why corridor density and consistent operating standards matter more than any single site's specifications.

4. Counterparty risk is a procurement criterion

Freewire's bankruptcy bricked Middlegate, but the larger risk on display in Nevada is operator pullout. Shell's exit took 12 sites offline at once. A network built on operators who can decide their charging division is no longer strategic is a network with a single point of failure that no driver can see. Our owner-operator model and our exclusive hardware partnership for Rangeway-owned Waystation and Basecamp deployments with an established European manufacturer are both counterparty risk decisions. Long-term commitment, by us and by our partners, matters as much as kilowatt rating.

5. The opportunity in Nevada is wide open

Nevada has more than 65,000 EV drivers today and one of the highest EV growth rates in the country. The state's rural corridors are a charging desert. The two corridors that most resemble Rangeway's thesis, US 50 across the Loneliest Road and US 93 between Las Vegas and Ely, are precisely the kind of long-distance leisure routes our network is built to serve. The question is not whether demand exists. The question is who builds the operator-led network that actually shows up.

> *Nevada had ribbon cuttings, press releases, a governor's vision, and $130 million in dedicated capital. What it did not have was an operator on the hook for every driver who pulled in expecting the charger to work. 24% of the stations are still operational. The other 76% are concrete pads with dead hardware on them.*

Closing Note

The Nevada Electric Highway is not a story about Nevada. The same pattern is visible in early state-led EV programs across the country wherever public capital was deployed without a long-horizon operator behind it. Rangeway's per-project funding strategy, owner-operator model, and hospitality-led format mix are the structural answer. The next time someone asks why we are not chasing a network-wide grant program, the Nevada Electric Highway is the answer.

Sources

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