

Shift to electrics drops into low gear

Prices, lack of charging stations among factors slowing vehicle demand

BY JEANNE WHALEN

The Biden administration's push to entice more Americans to buy electric vehicles is falling short of expectations as consumers fret over prices, battery range and a lack of charging stations.

U.S. sales of fully electric cars are still growing at a fast clip — they are up by more than 50 percent this year over 2022 — but automakers say growth has slowed in recent months, prompting them to trim their production plans and pause some investments.

“Automakers have moved from rosy to reality because consumer acceptance has grown more slowly. So they are looking at kind of slowing their rollout,” said Michelle Krebs, an industry analyst with Cox Automotive. The transition to EVs is “not going to be linear and there are going to be a lot of bumps in the road,” she added.

There were 869,000 fully electric vehicles sold in the United States in the first 10 months of this year, a 56 percent increase over the same period in 2022, according to data provider J.D. Power. That growth rate marked a slowdown from two years earlier, and was lower than what some automakers had forecast.

“The narrative has taken over
SEE **ELECTRIC VEHICLES** ON **A14**

Tot’s 3 a.m. raid on gifts stirs tidings of viral joy

BY TIMOTHY BELLA

Katie and Scott Reintgen were awakened at 3 a.m. on Christmas by their 3-year-old son, who had a loud and terrifying request for the gift he had just unexpectedly unwrapped: He needed scissors.

“He wanted to open up his Spider-Man web shooters, so, naturally, he needed scissors to cut them free,” Scott Reintgen, 35, told The Washington Post. “That’s when we realized something had gone terribly wrong.”

When the Reintgens went downstairs in their North Carolina home, their fears were confirmed: Their young son was so excited about what Santa Claus had brought him that he had opened all of his family’s gifts, hours before his two siblings would wake up.

“Yall,” Reintgen wrote on X, formerly Twitter. “My three year old came down at 3am and unwrapped EVERYONE’S presents.”

The photo posted to social media, which had been viewed more than 6 million times as of Tuesday morning, shows the destruction underneath the Christmas tree, with a pile of torn-up paper next to the family’s unwrapped gifts. The family’s Christmas had been ripped to shreds by their toddler in only a few minutes — and the parents now had to race against time to put it all back together.

“There was the cold realization that all the effort you put in the
SEE **CHRISTMAS** ON **A18**



SIMA DIAB FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

One family’s desperate escape from Gaza to Egypt

Four people make it out on one U.S. passport after a 10-day trek through ruins

BY HANNAH ALLAM

CAIRO — The first sign of trouble was the school bus that turned around and dropped Momen Yaghi’s daughter back home moments after picking her up in Gaza City on the morning of Oct. 7.

There would be no school that day, no school for a long time, Momen quickly understood as word spread of the mass killings and abductions carried out by Hamas inside Israel. Conflict had shaped life in Gaza for generations, but the scale of this attack instantly registered it as different.

Others panicked, but Momen, 50, clung to the belief that his family could ride out the war as they had previous eruptions, by stockpiling supplies and huddling indoors until the bombs stopped.

His miscalculation soon became clear. Their lives unraveled

Momen Yaghi, 50, a U.S. citizen, and wife Rania embrace on the balcony of their temporary home in Cairo on Nov. 19. They fled Gaza with their two teenage daughters after an Israeli bombardment destroyed the house where they were staying. They hope to reach the United States.

with lightning speed.

Momen saw old friends dead in the rubble of his neighborhood. His wife, Rania, was engulfed with grief over the loss of a beloved sister. Their teenage daughters began shaking in terror from the relentless explosions.

“Baba,” the girls pleaded with him, “it’s time to go.”

The family would set out on the same desperate search for safety as hundreds of thousands of other Gaza residents. But Momen possessed a slim blue American passport that meant his family, unlike most of those fleeing, might have a way out.

Their destination was the Rafah border crossing with Egypt.

In normal times, the trip is an hour by car. But Momen’s family
SEE **GAZA** ON **A10**

Conflict to continue: Israel says war will persist, even intensify. **A9**

Home birth midwives face scrutiny in Maryland

Parents sought help from the state Board of Nursing after their babies died. They are still waiting.

BY AMY BRITTAIN

It was only after their baby died that the Pucketts learned that the home birth midwife they had hired was not a licensed midwife at all.

They had paid \$2,250 to Tina Brown Overton for prenatal appointments, supervision during labor and the anticipated delivery of their son at their home in Crofton, Md. But after their son was stillborn, the Pucketts learned she had neither midwifery credentials nor a license as required by state law.

They filed a complaint with the Maryland Board of Nursing, which oversees midwives.

“She is illegally practicing midwifery care, putting mothers and babies at risk,” Naomi Puckett wrote to the board on Sept. 11, 2019. “She has devastated our family.”

More than four years later, Naomi and Jeff Puckett are left wondering if the board will act on their complaint.



FAMILY PHOTO

Tina Overton, right, tends to Naomi Puckett during a home delivery in Crofton, Md., in 2017, when Puckett had a stillborn son. She did not learn that Overton was unlicensed until after her baby died.

Growth picture positive for 2024

HOLIDAY SHOPPING BOLSTERS ECONOMY

Markets soar, and Fed is expected to cut rates

BY RACHEL SIEGEL AND AARON GREGG

They bought books and coats, fancy dinners and plane tickets. And as 2023 comes to a close, holiday shoppers offered yet another sign that the U.S. economy will roar into the new year.

On Tuesday, fresh retail sales data from Mastercard showed that consumers spent big on gifts, meals and apparel in November and December despite inflation’s lingering bite. Add on strong consumer confidence, and the S&P 500’s approaching an all-time high, and it’s clear that the U.S. economy is in a far better place than just about anyone expected, zapping any hints of a recession and bolstering hope that people will keep opening their wallets in 2024.

“Given the significant uplifts in holiday sales over the past couple of years, and the current pressures on consumer finances, this level of growth can be chalked up as something of a win for consumers,” said Neil Saunders, managing director for retail at GlobalData.

U.S. retail sales between Nov. 1 and Dec. 24 were up 3.1 percent compared with the same period a year before, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse, which measures sales in-store and online across various forms of payment. Online shopping accounted for a large share of the increase, rising 6.3 percent, compared with a 2.2 percent jump for in-person shopping. Apparel sales rose 2.4 percent. Plus, strong demand for in-person dining powered a 7.8 percent jump in restaurant spending.

Some categories showed declines: Jewelry sales, for example, fell 2 percent, while electronics declined 0.4 percent. (The overall report excludes car sales and is not controlled for inflation.)

The cheery holiday report was
SEE **SPENDING** ON **A18**

IN THE NEWS

Retaliatory strikes U.S. forces targeted Iranian-backed militias in Iraq after a drone attack that injured three American service members, one of them critically. **A9**

Standing with Ukraine Sen. Michael F. Bennet (D-Colo.) remembers a painful family history as he supports more aid for Kyiv. **A4**

THE NATION
Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) said she was the victim of a swatting attempt. **A2**
An appeals court tossed the convictions of ex-congressman Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.). **A2**

THE WORLD
An estimated 79 Ukrainian cultural figures have been killed since Russia invaded. **A8**
The world faced crisis after crisis this year, and many are expected to worsen in 2024. **A12**

THE ECONOMY
Virtual reality programs are popping up in elder-care facilities, with claims such as therapeutic and social benefits. **A13**
Are your social media habits healthy, or do you need a reset? Our quiz includes tips to keep you on the right track. **A13**

THE REGION
Traffic deaths in the District hit a 16-year high in 2023, as the city faces unmet goals in cutting road fatalities next year. **B1**
In Richmond, the apparent killing of a legendary buck stirred community grief and a state investigation. **B1**

STYLE
Max Ochs rubbed elbows with Bob Dylan and studied the blues with John Fahey. But his ambition always felt different. **C1**

FOOD
A chef in Omaha is getting creative — and serving some of the country’s best sushi. **E1**

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