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## EV Charging services can be a golden opportunity for physical store retailers

**Company:** METRO PROPERTIES Holding GmbH  
**Interview partner:** Olaf Schulze  
**Position:** Director Energy Management / Real Estate Sustainability

METRO PROPERTIES, a subsidiary of METRO AG, is responsible for the group's entire property portfolio. In this interview with its Energy Management/Real Estate Sustainability Director Olaf Schulze, we learn why EV Charging services should be a given at retail premises in the future. And that the automotive industry hasn't yet taken advantage of the opportunity retail locations offer.

**htb: Could you give us a brief overview of your role at METRO AG, as well as the guiding mission at METRO PROPERTIES Holding GmbH?**

OS: METRO PROPERTIES is a subsidiary of METRO AG, responsible for managing METRO properties across Europe. I've been responsible for energy management there for over 15 years now. My team and I take care of energy supply for our international wholesale business. At the forefront of our minds are energy efficiency (particularly where our refrigerated facilities are concerned), 'Carbon Accounting', decentralized power generation and the use of renewable energy. I'm additionally responsible for the METRO AG mobility vision, which includes the infrastructures needed to support the growth we're seeing in eMobility. Any journey, whether electric or conventional, and whether it's a business trip, logistics or a visit to METRO, generates emissions – and that's another of my focus areas. One of the most enjoyable, in fact. I have a strong team on my side – not just at our head office but also in our stores, which is where so many implementations ultimately take place.

**htb: What's the fundamental strategy at METRO AG? And whom does your EV Charging service target?**

OS: We've been engaged with the concept of EV Charging since as long ago as 2012, when we installed the first charge point at our head offices in Düsseldorf. Today there are around 100 charge points (10 of them for eBikes) at our METRO Campus alone. By 2030, our aim is to have 1000 charge points available across Europe. And so we're doing our bit to support alternative, environmentally-friendly drive technology. Both our staff and our customers can use our infrastructure at no charge – it's simply an added-value service. As a founding member of the EV100 initiative, we're committed to supporting the development of eMobility. Not only because it's a fundamental part of our own climate action strategy, but because it helps (sustainably) improve both quality of life and air quality in urban areas – which is

where many of our customers cater for their guests. We want to achieve climate-neutral operations across METRO's entire business by 2040, primarily through our own initiatives. Most of our leverage will come from energy, cooling and heating, which are responsible for a combined 93% of our emissions. But our staff and customers getting around also leave their mark, which is why we've created procedures to ensure that the number of eVehicles in our commercial fleet increases in line with the growing number of charging stations. But logistics does have its challenges: although we've been really successful in our eVan tests, we're still struggling to find efficient alternative drive technologies suitable for heavy vehicles built to take over 7500 kilograms – especially when it comes to the refrigerated trucks that are such a major part of our business.

**htb: So how do you envision the retail premises of the future – and how much space will be dedicated to EV Charging?**

OS: We see the wholesaler premises of the future as a physical property that's as close to the customer as possible and optimally efficient. For us, it would also be a zero-emissions store, where we take care of our own electricity needs by regenerative means and which we run on a climate-neutral basis. A store which our customers will reach without any emissions – because they'll be driving electric vehicles and can charge their cars during their shopping time. We configured our first net-zero emissions store in St Pölten, Austria, in 2016. Back then, we fitted it with ten charge points – but laid further cables so we could react to fast-growing demand and install more when needed.

**htb: Since EV Charging is going to be so important for retail locations in the future, what's the current status of METRO AG's ongoing implementations in this area?**

OS: As far as our fleet is concerned, we already have almost 300 eVehicles in Germany, France, Austria and various other countries, while a further 50 are on order. So, a fifth of our commercial vehicle fleet is already electric. For the time being, however, we do have to keep some internal combustion vehicles in operation...until eMobility becomes affordable – and related processes completely reliable. This will probably still take some time. But soon all management vehicles will be completely electric, since we at METRO do have the required charging infrastructure at all our administrative locations. That translates to 100 charge points in Germany alone. And we're really leading the way with our eMobility technology on both the user and supplier sides, particularly in Eastern Europe. We've already installed a charging infrastructure at every store in Poland and Hungary, and that will soon be the case in Slovakia too. All five locations in Bucharest are also fitted with EV Charging facilities, as well as all three Moldovan stores and eight of our 11 outlets in Bulgaria. In the rest of Europe, we know that our own infrastructure and electric fleet can be run on a process-reliable basis. We're currently installing 30 charge points at our office in Paris. At the moment, my focus is on planning our new zero-emissions store in Düsseldorf. This is another place where we'll be investing in charging infrastructure.

**htb: What do you see as the key factors driving the retail sector's transformation to electric technology?**

OS: We have to be honest: the Europe-wide Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, and the corresponding measures in each country, were the first factors to provide the necessary impetus. At METRO, it's not just the directive that drives action, but also our own climate strategy. We already have

over 500 charge points installed worldwide – not just because we have to ‘deliver’ in 2025, but also because we see the inherent value. Not only for our customers and employees, but also where that non-negotiable need for a reduction in transport sector emissions is concerned.

**htb: What business model governs charging infrastructure operation at METRO? Did you invest in your own infrastructure, or did you rent out parking lot space to charging infrastructure operators?**

OS: We don’t see operating our charging infrastructure as a business. METRO is an international wholesaler that’s happy to go the extra mile for its business customers and offer them special services. That means that when it comes to providing charging infrastructure, we look for partners who think the same way we do – while also being genuine specialists in charging infrastructure operation, maintenance and billing. In every country where we’ve already completed charging infrastructure installation, successful partnerships have been a feature. In Germany, on the other hand, it’s considerably more difficult to find partners for innovative, solutions-oriented collaborations.

‘We don’t expect to make money from EV Charging’

**htb: Who is responsible for developing the charging infrastructure?**

OS: The automotive industry should in fact take initial responsibility – simply selling eVehicles isn’t enough. Soaring eVehicle sales aren’t a lot of use if the charging infrastructure is lagging so far behind that the end user can’t charge up everywhere they go. So I’d like to see the auto industry recognize the opportunity the retail sector represents, considering its parking areas and the time people spend shopping at its premises. Other retailers should provide charging infrastructure for their employees, just like METRO has done. But the necessary framework for long-term investment by businesses needs to be defined by lawmakers, along with the creation of appropriate incentives and funding programs. In late 2019, the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure set up the National Center for Charging Infrastructure to align the various funding schemes at state and national level.

Other responsibilities of the National Center include assessing demand, planning and the coordinated development of a Germany-wide fast-charging network, as well as supporting local authorities in planning and implementing charging infrastructure installations. At European level, there’s now a continental installation plan including investments of €800 million, primarily in digitalization and sustainability. These funds should also be made available for charging infrastructure upgrades and expansion.

**htb: What are some of the challenges involved with building charging infrastructure at your locations?**

OS: Because operating charging infrastructure is highly complex, our model is to outsource operation at our stores by renting the necessary space to infrastructure operators.

We’ve negotiated various collaboration models with these infrastructure operator partners. For us, the most important thing is that the customer gets the service they want at the charge point – because the best shopping experience in the world will be ruined if their car isn’t charging outside as expected.

**htb: So, have you already found a way to approach landlords and talk about EV Charging?**

OS: We've launched the METRO eMobility initiative, which gets us talking with the owners of the plots we rent. Since March 2021, as defined by the German Buildings and Electromobility Infrastructure Law (GEIG), it's actually the owners who bear ultimate responsibility for providing charging infrastructure. But when it comes to our stores, we prefer to see this as a team effort that ultimately benefits our customers. That's why we have a thousand and one ideas for a wide variety of models under which we can work with our partners. Ultimately, though, our core competency is wholesale, while charging infrastructure is simply an added service for our customers.

**htb: What would be an ideal headline for you to see in major specialist publications?**

OS: 'Charge points at every EU store, commercial fleet fully electrified: METRO sets a new standard for eMobility.'

**htb: When you think about how transport will look in the future, what three words or phrases come to mind?**

OS: Clean. Cost-efficient. Digitalized.

This interview was conducted by Sabrina Wurzer, PR & Marketing Manager at has-to-be gmbh, on 12th July 2021

## About METRO PROPERTIES

METRO PROPERTIES is the real estate company of METRO AG, a leading international wholesale and food expert, operating in 34 countries and employing more than 97,000 people worldwide. The real estate company combines comprehensive wholesale and retail competence, highly developed real estate expertise and implementation capability. METRO PROPERTIES collaborates with local communities, business partners and selected investors to develop innovative and sustainable wholesale, retail, and mixed-use concepts. On both the national and international level, METRO PROPERTIES pursues active and value-enhancing asset management. Business partners and customers receive competent support worldwide. Apart from its headquarters in Germany, the company has operations in Poland and Turkey. In other countries, the company is represented by regional management and the METRO team.

## About has-to-be gmbh

has-to-be paves the way for sustainable mobility. With its comprehensive EV Charging solution and innovative services, has-to-be provides everything companies require to enjoy success in the field of EV Charging: from the scalable operation of charging infrastructure to the end-to-end management of worldwide mobility solutions.

More than 100 employees from ten nations work at the headquarters of has-to-be gmbh in the federal province of Salzburg and its offices in Munich and Vienna.

## Contact

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