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Coda Automotive

THE CODA SEDAN sells for \$37,250 but qualifies for a \$7,500 federal tax credit for electric vehicles. Its battery has an EPA-certified range of 125 miles a charge.

First all-electric Coda sedan rolls off the assembly line

DANA HULL

The first all-electric Coda sedan rolled off the assembly line in Benicia, Calif., on Monday, marking a big day for the privately held Los Angeles company.

Coda Automotive Inc. manufactures most of the vehicle's battery system and body in China. The parts are then shipped to the San Francisco Bay Area port city of Benicia for final assembly.

"Coda started five years ago in an airport hangar in Southern California," said Mac Heller, the company's executive chairman. "We shared a conviction that with technology and science, we could create cars

that do not spoil the Earth, drain the treasury or hurt the health of our children."

The company, which sees California as its primary initial market, has applied for a federal loan through the Energy Department's Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing program. But its application has been pending for nearly two years, and Coda went forward without any government funding.

Coda has 300 employees worldwide and about 25 at the Benicia plant. The company has not said how many cars it plans to manufacture in 2012 but the numbers are expected to be low — around 5,000 units or fewer.

The four-door car, which

looks like a classic sedan, sells for \$37,250 but qualifies for a \$7,500 federal tax credit for electric vehicles, making it cheaper than a Chevrolet Volt or the forthcoming Model S sedan from Tesla Motors Inc. Coda's battery comes with a 10-year, 100,000-mile warranty and an EPA-certified range of 125 miles per charge.

Three California customers are expected to take ownership of their Codas on Friday. The company plans to open a Coda "Experience Center," where consumers can come to learn more about electric vehicles, in Palo Alto this spring.

Hull writes for the San Jose Mercury News/McClatchy.