



## AT&T solar stations offer quick recharge in New York

by Roger Cheng | June 18, 2013

The telecom company has installed 25 Street Charge stations in parks throughout the five boroughs of New York. The initial run marks a trial for a potential broader deployment.



A New York City parks official checks out one of AT&T's new Street Charge solar charging stations.

(Credit: Roger Cheng/CNET)

AT&T is deploying solar-powered charging stations to help keep smartphones and other mobile gadgets juiced up in parks throughout New York.

The 25 stations, which each feature a microUSB, iPhone 4, and iPhone 5 plugs, as well as USB ports for other devices, are being set up in various parks this summer and offer a free recharge. They can be found this week in Riverside Park on the west side of Manhattan, in Union Square, and in Brooklyn Bridge Park, with more locations to come this summer.

The Street Charge project, which is still in its trial phase, comes out of AT&T's work during the recovery from Superstorm Sandy. The company had set up mobile charging stations in the blacked-out areas of New York, which inspired the idea of creating charging stations for everyday uses.

"We realized charging was the missing ingredient during the day," said Neil Giacobbi, who helps with gifts, sponsorships, and programs in the New York region for AT&T.

AT&T worked with Brooklyn-based Pensa to design the 10-foot-tall steel structure, a tower that branches out into three arms at the top, which hold the solar panels. The solar power technology was supplied by Goal Zero.

The charging stations are powered by the solar panels, and are standalone structures without an external power source or wires. In working with New York City, Giacobbi said it was important that the company didn't have to install any new wires or infrastructure to power the unit.

Packed to the gills with batteries, one station is designed to provide three to four days of continuous charging if holding a full charge. While the station can still absorb ultraviolet rays during cloudy or even rainy days, it can get fully charged up after four hours in direct sunlight. The stations charge at the same speed as normal wall outlets, although AT&T is looking at quick-charging technology down the line.



This station is next to the Pier 1 Cafe in Riverside Park on the west side of Manhattan.  
(Credit: Roger Cheng/CNET)

AT&T is paying for the 25 stations, and the city bears no cost, Giacobbi said, adding that the city is fully supporting this program.

Because there are no external wires and construction, the towers can be disassembled and then reassembled in another location. Giacobbi said that the stations will stay in their current spots for the

next month before being moved around. The company has staff monitoring the usage and will track where the optimal locations will be for each station.

So what's in it for AT&T? Giacobbi said the stations are here to keep phones on and running (even if they are for another carrier).

"If I don't have a charge, I can't use the network," he said.

The trials will run through the end of the year, after which AT&T will consider a longer-term plan. The company is considering expanding the number of stations, as well as potentially bring them to other cities.

"There are a lot of eyes on this project to see how it works," Giacobbi said.

Here are the planned locations:

Manhattan:

Riverside Park, Pier I (launches 6/18)  
Union Square Park, North Plaza (launches 6/19)  
Rumsey Playfield, Central Park Summerstage  
Hudson River Park Pier 59

Brooklyn:

Brooklyn Bridge Park, Pier 1; (launches 6/18)  
Fort Greene Park (launches 6/18)  
Coney Island  
Metrotech Plaza  
The Dumbo Arts Festival  
The Brooklyn Book Festival

Queens:

Rockaway Beach  
Clearview Golf Course  
Socrates Sculpture Park

Bronx:

Orchard Beach

Staten Island:

Governor's Island (launches 6/18)  
La Tourette Golf Course; Staten Island Zoo  
Randall's Island