



SOLAR CAR CHALLENGE BRINGS TEENS FROM ACROSS U.S. FOR CROSS-TEXAS ADVENTURE

High-schoolers will test cars they designed and built over five-day race

FORT WORTH, Texas – High school students from across the United States are preparing to head to Texas for the 30th annual Solar Car Challenge, during which they will race from Fort Worth to Fort Stockton over five days to see which team's car can go the greatest distance. The 631.7-mile race begins Sunday, July 19.



The Coppel Solar Car team competed last year at Texas Motor Speedway. This year, the team will participate in the Advanced Classic division of the race.

The Solar Car Challenge was established in 1993 by educator Dr. Lehman Marks. The program is designed to motivate students in science, engineering and alternative energy. Preparations for this year's race began with educational workshops last September, though it can take teams two to three years to see their solar cars come to fruition.

Students built these cars using their own ideas and starting from scratch. Before the race, their cars will face "scrutineering" – rigorous evaluation by a panel of experienced judges – at Texas Motor Speedway from July 16-18. Each car must pass all scrutineering criteria before the team is permitted to race.

During the race, car breakdowns, weather conditions, terrain and team experience will limit the number of miles a team can drive each day (the cars are trailered when necessary). This race will see the cars go through the piney woods of East Texas, the rolling hills of Central Texas and the flatlands of West Texas. The team driving the most miles accumulated over the five days of racing will be declared the winner.

Over the Texas race, students will stop in Palestine, Round Rock, Fredericksburg, San Angelo and Fort Stockton. In each city, the teams will showcase their cars for the public to examine. Along the route, they'll also stop for photos at each historic Texas courthouse they pass.

"The Solar Car Challenge has been named one of the top Science and Engineering programs in the country by Science & Technology magazine," Marks said. "We teach the kids how to build a plan, come up with a budget, fundraise, how to engineer the car and manage the project, all while they're learning about how to harness energy from the sun to make a car go down the road."



Dr. Lehman Marks (along with his dog, Sunny) rallies the teams during the final day of racing in the 2025 Texas Motor Speedway event.

This year's Solar Car Challenge will feature 24 teams from seven states, including 10 teams from Texas, seven teams from California, three from Oregon and one each from Michigan, Florida, New York and Washington. The Challenge has 261 high school solar car projects in various stages of development in 39 states, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Bahamas, Spain, Singapore, and China.

Teams arrive on July 15 to check in, and the next morning, they begin three days of scrutineering, a unique process through which the cars are tested for various roadworthy conditions. Solar cars must pass every station and meet the necessary criteria to be able to drive.

The race is completely volunteer-run, with former Solar Car Challenge competitors returning year after year to share their expertise with the next generation of students. These young adults use their vacation time and pay their own way to Texas because the experience is so meaningful. They run every aspect of

the road race, which occurs biannually, with alternating years showcasing cars on the track at Texas Motor Speedway.

The 2026 Solar Car Challenge is presented by title sponsors Onco, Lockheed Martin, Dell Technologies, The Caraway Family Foundation, Enel North America, The Muscato Family Fund, and The Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science at UTD.

“This is the brain sport,” Marks said. “It’s not just about building the car, but how to drive that car, solve the inevitable problems that happen with the car, and keeping your team intact through five grueling days of racing. Doing the Solar Car Challenge makes these students better equipped to face the challenges they’ll have in life.”

ABOUT THE SOLAR CAR CHALLENGE

The Solar Car Challenge & Education Program is designed to help motivate students in Science, Engineering, and Alternative Energy. We teach high school students how to plan, design, engineer, build, race, and evaluate roadworthy solar cars. Students demonstrate that green technology can create a better world. The Solar Car Challenge has 261 ongoing high school solar car projects located in 39 states, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, the Bahamas, Spain and Singapore. These teams are in the process of designing, engineering and building roadworthy solar cars in anticipation of an upcoming solar racing event. The Challenge’s Education Program provides support for schools seeking to be a part of this top project-based STEM Initiative. The Solar Car Challenge’s Education Program has served the educational community for 32 national events. More than 80,000 students have directly benefited from this program.