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Response to the HKSAR 'Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles'

Civic Exchange welcomes the Government's release of its electric vehicle (EV) roadmap, a critical component for Hong Kong to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Our city needs to rapidly curb carbon emissions from the transportation sector, which currently accounts for 17% of our total CO₂ emissions. EV technology is still evolving and yet unable to offer a full replacement of commercial vehicles. Correspondingly, in the EV roadmap, the Government places the focus on private vehicles, which account for 4.2%¹ of Hong Kong's carbon emissions. This means that the bulk of 11.8% from other road transport vehicles remains inadequately addressed in the roadmap. Hong Kong urgently needs to accelerate our transition to decarbonizing with comprehensive solutions for the entire transport sector. [The Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) has said we need to cut emissions by 50% by 2030 in order to decarbonize by 2050. Civic Exchange, in its own report last year said we need to reduce emissions by 6.6% annually in Hong Kong to reach decarbonization targets. We need urgent action with regard to the transport sector.

We take particular note of the following points in the EV Roadmap:

- The Government commits to ceasing registration of internal combustion engine (ICE) private vehicles by 2035. A robust EV sales target should be implemented for the public to directly assess progress and to make timely adjustments if needed. Civic Exchange recommends that Hong Kong should aim for EVs to take up 50% of new vehicle sales before 2030.

Further, the Government needs to devise complementary measures beyond EV popularization to curb private car usage, moving forward with congestion charging and electronic road pricing (ERP).

- Regular reviews of the Roadmap are critical. The captioned 5-year cycle is not rigorous enough to react to the swift changes occurring in the technological

¹ Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles

landscape and adjusting policies in a timely manner. Thus, we recommend the Government to provide higher frequency updates (e.g. annual reporting) on its targets and action items, in addition to the 5-year strategic review of the EV Roadmap.

- Stronger decarbonization targets and measures are needed for commercial vehicles and public transport, beyond promoting and extending vehicle trials. A clearer vision and concrete targets in these sectors should be adopted as soon as possible and should not be deferred to the next review in 2025. Initial targets for banning traditional commercial diesel vehicles could be achieved through a diesel levy system. Setting directions early on will enable the industry to adapt and develop suitable transition plans more rapidly.
- As a stopgap measure for diesel powered heavy vehicles, second generation biodiesel blends can be generated locally and used to substitute conventional diesel with immediate dampening effects on fuel-use carbon emissions. Long-term, the application of alternative fuel-cell electric vehicles (FCEV) and the opportunities of developing a hydrogen economy should be actively explored and be a major focus of the proposed task force on decarbonization technologies.
- EVs are typically heavier than their conventional fuel counterparts. This directly impacts the payload of commercial vehicles and may be perceived as a detrimental operational impact. We recommend the Government to explore changes to permitted gross vehicle weight limits to facilitate the transition to EV fleets for commercial operators.
- Supportive infrastructure for EVs should be improved and facilitate the deployment of commercial EVs, e.g. by including suitable chargers and parking berths. The Government should mandate private housing estates to provide vehicle chargers. For existing buildings, partnerships with real estate developers and suitable incentives to expand charging networks in non-public car parks should be introduced. Finally, amendments should be made to Buildings (Planning) Ordinances and Regulations to require new developments to provide suitable charging infrastructure.
- In addition to liaising with taxi operators on more suitable EV models and battery warranties, the Government should through its mandate of regulating taxi fuel devise a concrete roadmap to convert all taxis to New Energy Vehicles (NEV), including potential changes to the operational model of the taxi trade.

As noted by the Council for Sustainable Development² and Civic Exchange's own research³, to transform Hong Kong into a smart, sustainable, and climate-proof city means that improvements to Hong Kong's transport sector must align with three main principles: avoiding journeys, shifting journeys and improving efficiency.

While EV technology forms a vital part of improving efficiency and directly lowering carbon intensity, the Government must ensure that complementary measures, i.e. those that avoid journeys and those that shift journeys from high- to low-carbon transport modes, remain equally prominent on the policy agenda.

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² Report on Public Engagement on Long-term Decarbonisation Strategy

³ Towards a Better Hong Kong: Pathways to Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050