Press Release
24th Feb 2021

Clean Air Network’s Response to Budget 2021/22

Clean Air Network believes a well-resourced plan is needed to accelerate transition of commercial vehicles (including public transport) to new energy in order to significantly reduce air pollution at street level and thus more adequately safeguard public health, given for the fact that commercial vehicles account for over 90% of roadside air pollution (including particulate matters and nitrogen dioxide) in Hong Kong.

The Budget plan for financial year 2021 to 2022 announced by the Financial Secretary today, however, focused its resources on private vehicles (PCs), including raising First Registration Tax and Annual License Fee for PCs for 15 per cent and 30 per cent respectively, and to cease new registration of fuel-propelled PCs in 2035 or earlier. It is understandable that such measures may help to achieve decarbonization goals. However, it is questionable how these measures will achieve sizeable impact on cleaning up the air, especially at street level.

We are disappointed to see a lack of new measures and ambition shown in the Budget plan to accelerate transition of commercial vehicles to new energy vehicles, which will achieve BOTH clean air and decarbonisation goals, and will bring significant benefit to public health. Currently, the new energy vehicles account for tiny fraction of all commercial vehicles. For example, by 2020, there are only 36 electric buses operating in service, which account for only 0.5% of all 6,000 franchised buses in Hong Kong.

The provision of the New Energy Transport Fund will help to address some of the gaps en-route to quicker adoption of new energy commercial vehicular fleet in Hong Kong, but it is not enough to address to some of the deep-lying issues, including lack of infrastructure, application of new operation and financial models, etc.

There are other mentioned measures to improve air quality, which are not new. These include the phasing out Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles by 2027, trial scheme of electric minibus (from 2023) and trial scheme of electric local vessels (from 2023).

In terms of managing transport at demand side, it is frustrating to no specific timeline or objectives proposed for implementing the congestion charge and electric road pricing trial schemes. Also, there is no mention of strengthening the air pollution monitoring network albeit the academic has pointed out the insufficiency.

ABOUT CLEAN AIR NETWORK

Established in 2009, Clean Air Network is a non-profit organization with charitable status which envisions to clean up Hong Kong’s air until it meets the World Health Organization's recommended
safe level. Our mission is to amplify the voices of individuals, groups and organizations and together urge the Government to take appropriate measures to clean air.
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