

Electric vehicle adoption armenia

It is widely believed that electric vehicles will transform human mobility and energy usage patterns. The origins of this transformation, however, are rooted several decades back.

In 1990, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) passed the zero-emissions vehicle (ZEV) mandate, which called for major automobile manufacturers in the U.S. to offer electric vehicles; otherwise, they were to be barred from selling combustion engine vehicles across the state. Although General Motors managed to mass produce its first electric vehicle model EV1 - a whopping 5,000 cars - pressure from auto manufacturers, the oil industry and the U.S. federal government was so massive that they forced CARB to not only reverse the mandate, but also to order the destruction of the 5,000 EV1s. This tragic episode in the automotive industry is well documented in a 2006 film called "Who Killed the Electric Car?"

Fast forward to 2012 and the director of the film, Chris Paine, released a sequel called "Revenge of the Electric Car," which offered a sneak peak into the early years of Tesla Motors and Elon Musk's first steps in the industry.

E-vehicles are actually less complex than combustion engine cars. Compare, for example, the average 30,000 parts that go into the design of a traditional vehicle to the 3,000 in a comparable e-vehicle. Hence, the latter does not require nearly as much maintenance as traditional vehicles do, ranging from oil maintenance to multiple part replacements, though an eventual battery replacement is a significant cost. E-vehicles can also recover energy from the braking process, which helps keep overall fuel costs low.

Until recently, there were a number of factors preventing the widespread use of electric vehicles:

When assessing these concerns today, essentially all but the last one has been addressed. Now, the market offers multiple options for e-vehicles from high-end Teslas and Audis to more budget options from China like BYD and JAC. These car manufacturers' e-vehicles are not only up to par in reliability, power and quality to that of combustion engine cars, but in fact surpass the latter in certain aspects. For example, some e-vehicle models can go up to 500-600 km per charge, and the charging station network for e-vehicles is growing exponentially.

In Armenia, drivers typically take short to medium distance trips. Nevertheless, few know that Armenia's current charging infrastructure enables the use of e-vehicles for country-wide trips.

Thus, the only remaining obstacle preventing e-vehicle user growth from leap-frogging the status quo is the relatively higher initial purchase price, compared to fossil fuel-powered vehicles.

This is why many countries, organizations and entities are opting for e-mobility at scale, by means of

employing grant and low-interest loan facilities from international environmental, climate and financial institutions.

Armenia has the potential to tap into these financing facilities for upgrading and electrifying its public transport through climate and environment funds available from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), European Investment Bank (EIB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), International Financial Corporation (IFC), KfW and others. Some of these financial institutions do not provide any financial facilities for the modernization of public transport unless it is for electric vehicles (e.g. EIB).

In 2019, ADB conducted a study and offered recommendations on fostering electric mobility in Yerevan with a special focus on the deployment of electric buses. The recommendations are substantive and feasible in nature, and it would certainly be to the benefit of Armenia if the government followed them, especially considering that ADB had also offered support in mobilizing climate finance for e-mobility.

In 2019, the Ministry of Environment initiated the development and adoption of a legislative provision effectively waiving the 20% Value Added Tax (VAT) on the import and sale of electric vehicles until the end of 2021. Coupled with the Eurasian Economic Union's decision in May 2020 to waive customs taxes on e-vehicles, this move has led to very favorable import and sales conditions for e-vehicles in Armenia, resulting in unprecedented growth for e-vehicle imports and sales over the past year (15,000% growth, or 155-fold in the first half of 2020 as compared to e-vehicles imported in the first half of 2018).

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