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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my opinions regarding the low sales of electric vehicles and the respective methods to tackle them to raise their prevalence. Your news article dated 1st January reported that electric cars constitute only 3% of Hong Kong's vehicle market. Notwithstanding that electric vehicles have been praised for their low pollution and exhaust gas emission, their failure in Hong Kong is unsurprising and foreseeable. Most drivers still opt for conventional petrol vehicles as their primary choice, although the government is now encouraging drivers to switch to this greener alternative. The reasons for the low sale of electric cars are to be discussed below.

The relatively higher prices of electric vehicles, compared with conventional petrol vehicles with similar features and quality, contribute to the low sales of electric cars. Though in recent years, there have been numerous breakthroughs in battery efficiency and production of electric cars, lowering their cost and price, the technology is not mature yet as the development of electric vehicles only began in the 2010s. Vehicle engineers and factories are still encountering various obstacles in designing and manufacturing, such as the low capacity of batteries and the limits of vehicle engines, causing the research and production costs to climb. Unlike petrol vehicles, the technology and production reached maturity in the 80s, and car companies are now only refining the design without introducing expensive technology. Cheap materials and car components are available to produce petrol cars, making their price more affordable. While

electric cars can substitute petrol cars, the relatively high price handicaps their sale, as consumers prefer an option to purchase vehicles with similar features at a lower price. Aside from the higher price of electric cars, the inconvenience of finding charging stations is also detrimental to increasing its popularity.

The inadequate number and patchy distribution of charging stations in Hong Kong inconveniences electric cars' driving experience, impeding their sales. Due to the slow progress in installing charging stations and limited land supply, the number of charging stations is far from adequate to satisfy the demand for charging services currently. The survey indicates the ratio of charging stations to electric cars is 1:4, implying that drivers encounter difficulties when finding charging stations. Not to mention the uneven distribution, most charging stations are only located in some gas stations and car parks in malls. Installing them is still uncommon in car parks in housing estates and offices, where people need them the most and find the most convenient. Therefore, the insufficient number of charging stations

detracts from their attractiveness. From consumers' perspective, driving experience is their primary concern, but electric cars fail to meet up their expectations. As a result, its low popularity is foreseeable. However, the status quo can be improved with government policies.

Reducing taxes levied on electric cars can raise their affordability, increasing the incentives and enthusiasm of customers to purchase them. Although the government cannot interfere with the pricing of vehicle producers, reducing the registration tax of electric cars can lower their selling price after tax, closing the price gap between petrol vehicles and electric vehicles. As they become more affordable, they can act as a substitute for petrol cars, which can widen the options provided to customers and is conducive to their sales. Besides reducing taxes, building more electric-car-related facilities can tackle the issue.

Increasing the availability of electric vehicle charging stations improves the convenience of driving and driving experience, enhancing drivers' willingness to switch to electric vehicles. The major hurdle in promoting electric vehicles is the inadequate number of charging stations. It is suggested that the government should allocate more resources to raise the availability of related facilities, such as subsidising the installation of charging stations and giving some government land in urban areas for installing them. Therefore, the uneven distribution of charging stations can be ameliorated, and the driving experience can be enhanced. The sales of electric cars will increase if the convenience of driving is improved.

As the world is increasingly aware of and conscious of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental issues, phasing petrol vehicles and replacing them with electric vehicles are the future. Around the globe, numerous advanced countries are now heading towards the goals, but Hong Kong is still lagging behind. It is crucial for the government to put strenuous efforts to catch up to reduce harm to the environment and fulfil the goal of zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong