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Executive Abstract

The goal is to increase the use of alternative fuels by promoting “sustainable transport policies” within corporations and communities.

Abstract

During the last few years there has been an increasing discussion of using alternative fuels/vehicles for transportation in the world. Currently the auto manufacturers are all working hard on developing new vehicles, battery vehicles, hydrogen, methane, plug-in, ethanol, etc. Some types are already on the market and can compete with normal gasoline vehicles such as methane and ethanol, but others are for seen on the market over the next few years.

When introducing new vehicles and new energy paradigms it is of utmost importance to see government and communities taking a leading role in testing vehicles to provide platform for installing infrastructure. Such demonstration projects also provide an excellent research platform for the three pillars of sustainability, environment, economies and social research. Without such a leading role it is difficult to get the public motivated and also the public has to get to know the technology to accept it as a potential future solution.

This has now been tested in Iceland over the last few years. In 2003 Icelandic New Energy (INE) and partners started demonstrating hydrogen buses in Reykjavik Iceland. This made the technology very visible and thousands of people used the buses and got a little familiar with the new technology. Media was keen on participating and a lot of discussion was in the society regarding future fuels. Just this initiative had very positive impact on the discussion in the society. A little earlier methane from a landfill site had been introduced as another option for alternative fuels. Since then the use of methane vehicles has increased a lot, more than 150 methane vehicles on the streets today, and the same applies to hydrogen though the number is much smaller. However it has been very difficult to take the next large steps so that widespread infrastructure can be built. Here sustainable mobility policies can play a major role.

A couple of companies in Iceland have now introduced sustainable mobility policies and they are the pioneers in using alternative vehicles, companies like Reykjavik Energy and the Postal service. Still the increased use of alternatives is very little compared to possibilities. It is evident that if communities and governments adopt sustainable mobility policies and follow them via procurements for vehicles etc. the possibilities of drastically increasing the numbers of alternative vehicles in use is possible. This is even more evident with the current economic crisis,

when the general public has even less opportunities to buy more expensive vehicles which are more environmentally friendly, use domestic fuels and might in the long run actually be cheaper for the society if external costs are taken into account. INE has over the last few year participated in two EU-funded projects, SUGRE – promotion of green fleets and NEEDS – evaluation of externalities for fuels, to support this argument. Publications from these projects are now available and both support the positive societal impact of using environmental vehicles using domestic fuels.

At present the society can not ignore the environment but there is a tendency to do so during economic crisis. Governments /communities must incorporate sustainable mobility policies into their procurement for future vehicles and encourage companies to do the same. This should be part of the “corporate social responsibility ” (CSR). This is probably the most effective way to promote new technologies and create demand, which is the key for a more sustainable future. Part of this policy from government is to apply tax tools to accomplish this. Already in Iceland the government has revoked all taxes on hydrogen vehicles which has created the current platform for demonstration activities.

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