

3 September 2013 - Beijing: plans to reduce air pollution

3 September 2013 - Beijing to consider fees for car congestion

By Zheng Xin & Wu Wencong - China Daily

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/03/content_16938879.htm

Move would help cut air pollution in the capital by a quarter by 2017.

Beijing may take the road followed by other international metropolises by imposing a congestion fee for cars in the center of the city.

Observing the practice of peers such as London, Milan and Tokyo, the Chinese capital may limit car use in the center of the city, which authorities hope will cut PM2.5 levels.

Car emissions are believed to account for one-third of PM2.5, a major air pollutant, in most congested areas in Beijing.

The congestion charge would be levied mainly on vehicles in the downtown area and will be set out in the near future by the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau and Beijing Commission of Transport.

"Whoever pollutes the air is responsible to clean it up," Fang Li, spokesman for the bureau, said at a news conference on Monday.

The congestion fee is one of the key tasks of a five-year clean air action plan for the Chinese capital, which has been choking in smog, especially during winter heating seasons.

Next year, Beijing will also ban private cars at certain times and areas, the bureau said.

The current restriction bans private cars one workday a week, based on the last digit of the license plate, while the stricter regulation will further reduce vehicles on the road by prohibiting certain vehicles from seriously congested areas, the bureau said.

"Despite the license plate restriction, the number of vehicles in the city is still overwhelming and contributes substantially to the city's pollution. It's time the city comes up with a stricter regulation," said Yu Jianhua, who is in charge of air pollution management at the bureau.

The capital aims to reduce PM2.5 concentration to 60 micrograms per cubic meter by the end of 2017, down 25% from 2012.

"The government is now reducing the PM2.5 concentration by 2 to 3% each year, and a reduction of some 5% each year is a great challenge," Yu said.

The role that vehicle emissions play in the forming of PM2.5 varies as target areas change, said He Kebin, a professor of environmental science and engineering and the executive dean of Tsinghua University's graduate school.

"For example, car exhaust contributes to about 22% of air pollution within the areas that are under jurisdiction of the municipal government," he said. "But the figure may rise to more than one-third if we narrow the area to downtown Beijing within the Second Ring Road."

Yu said details are still being studied and will be released in the near future, and the government will learn from experiences abroad, including Milan, Paris, London and Tokyo.

"Many cities worldwide have come up with congestion charges, and most of them prove effective," he said.

"The government will hold public hearings before the implementation of the congestion fee and regional vehicle restriction, and will widely gauge public opinion," he said.

Zhang Tianlong, a 49-year-old Beijing resident, said the restriction on private vehicles would be inconvenient, yet is acceptable if the number of cars on the road is obviously reduced.

Zhang also emphasized that it is important government cars take the lead and that compensation be given to car users.

"It's unfair if you buy a car and are informed later that you are forbidden from driving," he said.

"Some compensation might greatly ease the commuter's dissatisfaction."

The city will also come up with stricter rules targeting cars from other provinces.

Under the new restriction, to be carried out in 2014, vehicles from outside Beijing will be forbidden from entering the Sixth Ring Road unless with permission.

Currently, cars from other provinces are prohibited from entering the Fifth Ring Road from the morning peak hours 7 am to 9 am, and the evening peak hours 5 pm to 8 pm.

The city vows to control private car ownership within 6 million by the end of 2017, from more than 5.2 million as of early 2013.

3 September 2013 - Beijing aims to slash coal use

By Wu Wencong (China Daily) wuwencong@chinadaily.com.cn

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2013-09/03/content_16939110.htm

The Beijing municipal government has vowed to slash the capital's consumption of coal by more than 50% over five years based on 2012 levels, according to a clean-air action plan issued on Monday.

With the plan, local government is aiming to reduce the proportion of coal used within the city's total energy mix to below 10%. Pollution from coal-fired emissions is a major contributor to Beijing's smog, especially during the winter.



The plan aims to reduce the amount of fine particulate matter to 60 micrograms per cubic meter by 2017, which would be a 25% drop from 2012 levels. This requires the capital to slash 13 million metric tons of coal consumption over five years.

The municipal government has been cutting down on coal consumption for 14 years, according to China Environmental News, which is run by the Environmental Protection Ministry. Within that time frame, according to the publication, Beijing has slashed 7 million tons from its total coal consumption.

The plan issued on Monday lists a number of coal-cutting measures, including allocating a coal quota to districts and key users, strengthening the capital's gas and electricity supply and revising a sulfur concentration standard in coal.

By reducing its coal consumption, the government says it will increase the demand for natural gas supply to 24 billion cubic meters by 2017, a goal the government said it will meet.

"The supply of natural gas within and outside China is promising since more natural gas reserves have recently been discovered," said Zhou Dadi, vice-chairman of China Energy Research Society.

Four gas-based power plants will begin operations in Beijing by 2014. It has been estimated that they will cut the use of coal by about 9.2 million tons.

Another measure within the plan calls for replacing low-quality coal usually used in rural and suburban areas with high-quality coal that is low in sulfur content before the 2016 heating season begins.

"These areas use about 4 million tons of coal every year, accounting for less than 20% of the city's total consumption. Yet because of the coal's low quality, the sulfur dioxide generated amounts to more than 70% of the total emissions," said Wang Jian, deputy head of the pollution prevention and control department of the Environmental Protection Ministry.

Wang said all low quality coal will be phased out in 2016.

Beijing is also trying to completely eliminate the use of coal within the Second Ring Road, the core area of the city, an aim first established in 2001. So far, about 200,000 households had switched from coal to electricity by the end of last year. The plan issued on Monday said by the end of 2015, the remaining 65,000 households within the area will begin using electricity for their winter heating.

3 September 2013 - Air plan not enough

China Daily

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2013-09/03/content_16939391.htm

Beijing's environmental authority announced an action plan on Monday to deal with the capital's increasingly serious air pollution. According to the plan, motor vehicles will be restricted in different areas during different time periods, and a study will be conducted into levying a congestion charge to reduce traffic flows and cut down on exhaust emissions.

The plan also outlines that the capital will make efforts to control its rapidly increasing population to ease the pressure on its environment.

Given the quality of life of residents is compromised by the severe congestion that plagues the city and the heavy smog that shrouds it on winter days, such a plan is long overdue.

The plan also says that Beijing will restrict the total number of motor vehicles to no more than 6 million by the end of 2017. However, it will be difficult to achieve this without new regulations.

There are already more than 5 million vehicles in the city, and despite the license plate lottery, which is meant to control the number of cars in the capital, drivers can still apply for plates in other cities and drive their cars in Beijing.

And with at least four of the country's most polluting cities in surrounding Hebei province, the action plan will not be able to keep the capital's air clean even if it is properly implemented.

Studies suggest a quarter of the pollutants in the city's air comes from its surrounding areas.

Although necessary and welcome, the proposed action plan alone will definitely not be enough to clean up Beijing's air.

Instead of the city trying to be the center of everything, there needs to be a clear plan to develop it into a cultural and political center.

Too big to be comfortable and sustainable is the lesson Beijing should learn from its past development.

In addition, joint action with surrounding areas and cities is essential if Beijing is to enjoy clear skies once and for all.

So rather than a quick fix, what the capital needs is a long-term plan for its sustainable, eco-friendly development.

3 September 2013 - Beijing to cut car registrations in 2014

Xinhua

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/03/content_16941097.htm

BEIJING - Beijing will reduce car registrations from next year in a bid to clean up its air and ease traffic congestion, local transport authorities said Tuesday.

The commission is working with several other government agencies on a new monthly limit on car registrations for the next few years, said Rong Jun, a spokesman of the municipal commission of transport.

The new limit will be announced in late November and be effective in 2014, Rong told a press briefing.

According to a five-year clean air action plan (2013-2017) released Monday, the total number of vehicles in the city will be restricted to around 6 million by the end of 2017.

The city had 5.35 million vehicles at the end of July, according to figures from the Beijing Traffic Management Bureau.

Beijing started to cap the number of cars that could be registered annually in 2011 to 240,000, about one-third of the number registered in 2010. Potential car buyers are required to participate in a license plate lottery.

In August, the municipal commission of transport received about 1.6 million new car license applications. One out of 80 applicants got car purchase permits as only 20,000 new license plates are now issued each month.

2 September 2013 - Beijing vows to reduce PM 2.5 density by 25%

Xinhua

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/beijing/2013-09/02/content_16940881.htm

BEIJING -- The Beijing municipal government on Monday pledged to reduce PM 2.5 density by 25% or more by 2017 with the implementation of a five-year action plan.

According to the plan, air quality will improve significantly by 2017, with PM 2.5 density controlled to around 60 micrograms per cubic meter.

PM 2.5 are airborne particles measuring less than 2.5 microns in diameter which can pose health risks.