

LCQ18: Provision of additional electric vehicle chargers on campus

Following is a question by Prof the Hon William Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

There are views that with the popularisation of electric vehicles (EVs), the switch to EVs for school buses and teachers' cars will become a trend, and the demand for EV chargers on campus is bound to grow day by day. In addition, the education sector has attached more and more importance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and providing additional EV chargers on campus can achieve the effect of cultivating correct SDG values among the next generation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the measures in place to encourage the education sector to switch to using more EVs, for instance, whether there are policies and measures to encourage the switch to EVs for school buses and the provision of additional EV chargers on campus; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will consider formulating relevant policies;

(2) of the current number of EV chargers on campus, with a breakdown by school type (i.e. university, post-secondary college, secondary school and primary school), charging speed (i.e. standard, medium and quick) and District Council district;

(3) of the procedures and formalities for providing EV chargers on campus; whether there is a dedicated government department to centrally handle the relevant matters; if not, whether it will consider designating a government department to take charge of the relevant matters;

(4) as it is learnt that the Lotteries Fund has donated electric school buses to special schools, but their applications for providing EV charging piles have not been approved, of the policies and measures put in place by the authorities to assist those schools to which electric school buses have been donated in installing EV chargers; and

(5) given that the Government has launched the EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme to subsidise the installation of EV charging-enabling infrastructure in private housing courts, whether the Government will launch a similar subsidy scheme to subsidise the installation of EV chargers in schools; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To work towards the goal of achieving carbon neutrality before 2050 in Hong Kong, developing green transport is of paramount importance. The Government has implemented various measures in recent years to encourage citizens to switch to electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce air pollution and carbon emission. In consultation with the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the reply to the question raised by Prof the Hon William Wong is as follows:

(1) and (5) The Government has been actively promoting the use of new energy transport tools to the transport trade and charitable/non-profit making organisations, and subsidising the trials of various new energy transport technologies through the \$1.1 billion New Energy Transport Fund (NET Fund). Schools, education institutions or eligible non-franchised bus operators which have their own school buses are welcome to apply for the NET Fund to trial electric buses (e-buses) or electric light buses (e-LBs) as school buses. The subsidy level is the price difference between an EV and its conventional vehicle, or half of the price of an EV whichever is higher. In addition, the NET Fund also subsidises 75 per cent of the cost of the charging facility (including the charger and its installation). To encourage the switch of school buses to electric ones, the Government has organised briefings and workshops for schools, education institutions and school bus operators to share the benefits of using new energy transport and encourage the sector to apply for the NET Fund to trial electric school buses. Since 2011, the NET Fund has approved over 300 trials, including more than 40 e-buses and e-LBs, of which at least four were used as school buses.

The Government launched the EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme (EHSS) in October 2020. The Scheme aims to facilitate parking space owners of existing private residential buildings and housing estates with numerous owners and dispersed ownership to participate in the installation of EV charging-enabling infrastructure for their car parks by resolving their co-ordination and technical difficulties encountered, making it easier for them to install the required chargers in future for the charging of their EVs. The target recipient of the EHSS does not cover the parking spaces at schools. The application period of the EHSS is going to end soon. The Government has no plan to expand the coverage of the EHSS to include parking spaces at schools and other facilities at this stage.

In addition, the Government updated the Joint Circular on Green Government Buildings in March 2023. The new requirement stipulates that all parking spaces for private cars, motorcycles and light goods vehicles (whether indoor or outdoor) within the boundaries of newly built government buildings with tender documents issued on or after April 1, 2023, must be fully equipped with EV medium chargers.

(2) to (4) The Government's standing policy on electric private car is that owners should primarily charge their private cars at home, work place or places they travel to regularly to meet the general daily operational needs. It is noted that some car parks of post-secondary institutions have been installed with charging facilities.

As for primary and secondary schools, they usually engage school bus operators to provide service for their students and some of the school buses serving students of several schools at the same time might not be parked at schools. Some schools premises are provided with a few parking spaces and the schools, based on actual operational needs and having fully consulted key stakeholders and obtained approval from the School Management Committee/ Incorporated Management Committee, may install EV charging facilities within school premises in compliance with relevant legislation and regulations. When installing EV charging facilities, schools are required to strictly observe relevant legislation and regulations, and guidelines issued by relevant government departments from time to time to ensure the facilities are in compliance with the safety standards and the requirements of the relevant legislation and regulations (e.g. the facilities must be installed at designated parking spaces within the registered school premises, electrical wiring works must be carried out by a registered electrical contractor and registered electrical workers of the appropriate grade, and the electrical installation must be inspected and tested before it is energised). Furthermore, schools should draw up school-based mechanism and guidelines to clearly set out the arrangements on the usage, expenditure, repair and maintenance of the EV charging facilities.

The Education Bureau (EDB) has not received any special schools' application for installation of EV charging facilities for donated EV school buses. Considering the fact that charging facilities are relatively new equipment to schools, the EDB is consulting relevant government departments and examining the formulation of guidelines applicable to schools so that schools can know more clearly about the legislation and regulations related to the installation of EV charging facilities and other factors requiring attention. The Government does not maintain information on the number of EV chargers installed at schools.