California lawmaker aims to ban gasoline car sales
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San Francisco, 3 October (Argus) — A California lawmaker wants the state to follow the lead of countries like the UK and France and end the sale of gasoline and diesel cars by 2040.

Assemblymember Phil Ting (D) says he will introduce legislation in 2018 that would effectively end the transportation sector's reliance on fossil fuels in the state.

Ting says the proposal, which would ban the sale of petroleum-based vehicles after 2040, would help the state meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

"With transportation accounting for most emissions that contribute to dirty air and climate change, we need to get more clean vehicles on the road and provide incentives to help Californians buy them," Ting said. "We also need a hard deadline to ensure that the transfer to zero emission vehicle technology occurs."

The transportation sector is responsible for nearly 40pc of greenhouse gas emissions in California.

Ting has yet to write the legislation, but his idea may have the early support of key policymakers. Air Resources Board chair Mary Nichols said last week in an interview that governor Jerry Brown (D) has asked her to look at the issue after China said it is considering a phase-out of the internal combustion engine that require fossil fuels for power.

The move toward electric vehicles appears to be gaining momentum internationally. Ting's 2040 deadline is shared by the UK and France, while Norway and India say they will eliminate gasoline and diesel car sales by 2025 and 2030, respectively.

US automakers are taking notice. General Motors (GM) yesterday announced plans to roll out 20 new electric vehicle models by 2023.

"General Motors believes in an all-electric future," GM executive vice president Mark Reuss said.

California has over 300,000 electric vehicles on the road, which leads all US states, but the industry remains nascent. Electric vehicles accounted for 5pc of California's auto sales in the first quarter of 2017, according to the public policy group Next 10. The state has set a target of 1.5mn zero-emission vehicles by 2025.

Clean energy think tank Energy Innovation says that Ting's goal is feasible but needs to account for potential costs and the effect on low-income communities to gain broad support in the legislature.

"It seems likely that such a mandate would include some performance-based characteristics, ensuring goals for cost and convenience are met, and providing an out if not," Energy Innovation research director Chris Busch said.

Petroleum producers warn such a move will add to the state's already "significant costs" for addressing climate change.

"The idea of creating new policies and restrictions on what and how we drive to work, school and family getaways shows the astonishing disconnect between some policymakers and the residents of Californians," Western States Petroleum Association president Catherine Reheis-Boyd said.

Ting has set an ambitious agenda for the 2018 session. He is also the author of a bill that would significantly increase rebates for electric vehicles. That bill cleared the Assembly in June but failed to come up for a vote in the Senate. Lawmakers are likely to revisit the proposal when they return to Sacramento in January.