By 2030, electric vehicles will rule Paris' streets

Banning gas-powered cars is the latest in a crackdown on pollution.

MATT HICKMAN
October 19, 2017, 8:15 a.m.

190 Tweet 1



Paris gets serious about reducing air pollution and its reliance on fossil fuels. (Photo: Christoph Archambault/AFP/Getty Images)

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo is the pollution-combating, carbon footprint-shrinking, public transport-championing clean air warrior that all major cities across the globe need and deserve. And although the French auto industry and some Parisians may not share the same sentiments, Hidalgo's latest move is also her greatest: a phase-out of all gas-powered vehicles within Paris city limits by the year 2030.

In addition to cars that run on gasoline, vehicles with exhaust-spewing diesel engines will also disappear from the City of Lights. However, that rule will take effect a few years sooner, ideally just ahead of the 2024 Summer Olympics, an event that has seen Paris officials scrambling to clean up the city's waterways in addition to its sometimes smog-choked air. In 2014, Spanish-born Hidalgo, a member of the Socialist Party and Paris' first female mayor, named 2020 as the year diesel cars would be phased out entirely, save for some exceptions like low-income car-owners who would be occasionally allowed to drive older model vehicles.

All of France will move to end the sale of gas and diesel cars by 2040 as part of a countrywide effort to reduce air pollution and, a bit further down the line, achieve carbon neutrality. (The United Kingdom revealed a similar plan just weeks after France's environment minister Nicholas Hulot made clear his country's intentions. Both moves are seen as reactions to the Trump administration's decision to pull out of the Paris climate agreement.)

Per Reuters, the French government believes "speedier phase-outs" are necessarily in large cities before taking effect in rural areas.

"This is about planning for the long term with a strategy that will reduce greenhouse gases," Christophe Najdovski, a deputy mayor who oversees transportation and travel policy, recently explained in a radio interview. "Transport is one of the main greenhouse gas producers...so we are planning an exit from combustion engine vehicles, or fossil-energy vehicles, by 2030."



Traffic on Champs-Elysees. The iconic avenue is now closed once a month to traffic as part of a larger effort to combat air pollution. (Photo: Thomas Samson/AFP/Getty Images)

A natural progression

Although ambitious, gradually freeing the storied Parisian streetscape of combustion engine cars in favor of emissions-free electric vehicles isn't likely a move that will surprise those who embrace and abide by Hidalgo's unwavering environmental policies. It's also a move that Hidalgo's detractors, who have railed tirelessly against her so-called "war on cars," probably saw coming as well. (Worth noting: an estimated 60 percent of Parisians have eschewed car ownership and rely on public transportation, bikes, car share services and their own two feet to get around town.)

After all, pushing aside old gas-guzzlers to allow electric vehicles to rule the road seems a natural progression.

While her predecessor, former Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, did wonders for the city's cycling infrastructure while opening up the possibilities of a car-lite Paris, it's Hidalgo who has taken the proverbial bull by the horns. Following a stretch of abysmal, Beijing-esque air quality readings in the spring of 2016, Hidalgo enacted temporary, alternate-day driving rules based on motorists' license plates. In July of that same year, officials restricted motorists from operating cars manufactured before 1997 on weekdays in hopes of keeping higher-polluting vehicles off the streets. Just a couple months later, Paris City Council voted to permanently close a traffic-ridden expressway running alongside the Right Bank of the River Seine to vehicular traffic and convert it into a pedestrian promenade.

What's more, earlier this month Paris hosted a citywide *mostly* car-free day (taxis, emergency workers, delivery vehicles, tourist coaches and residents with special permits were allowed to stay on the road). And on the first Sunday of every month, a number of high-traffic — and super tourist-y — streets like Avenue des Champs-Élysées are closed to vehicular traffic. Lastly, during periods when the city is enveloped in a particularly problematic gray haze, officials have made metro and bus service along with Vélib, the citywide bike-sharing scheme, completely *gratis* to encourage residents to leave their cars parked at home.



An electronic screen in central Paris announces driving restrictions during a wintertime bout of poor air quality. (Photo: Patrick Kovarik/AFP/Getty Images)

So about the 'B' word ...

As for the plan to do away with gas-powered cars by 2030, Hidalgo's office is reluctant to call the move an outright ban, as the French media has been quick to refer to it.

In a press release issued to clarify the matter, the mayor's office states:

> No measures of prohibition or sanction are included in the new Climate Plan Air Énergie Territorial de Paris. In order to achieve the goal of an end to the thermal engines in 2030, the City has decided to invest in the development of alternatives and in the reinforcement of financial aids that allow individuals and professionals to buy clean vehicles.

The above statement hints at a solution to one of the main points of criticism that has been lobbed at Hidalgo and her administration: phasing-out older model vehicles is detrimental to car-dependant Parisians who may not be able to afford replacing an old, inefficient clunker with an electric vehicle.

Others have lamented that current pollution-eliminating measures such as car free-days and pop-up pedestrian zones hurt businesses and detract from Paris' bustling, seductively chaotic atmosphere. And there is some truth to this — Paris wouldn't be Paris without honking horns, flashing lights and cars, bikes and scooters whirring by in every direction. Plans to phase-out gas and diesel cars within the next 13 years doesn't necessarily mean an end to the city's thrilling streetscape. It just means you'll be inhaling less pollution and sitting in less gridlock while soaking it all in.

Profile Latest Stories
Matt Hickman (@mattyhick) writes about design, architecture and the intersection between the natural world and the built environment.

Related on MNN:
Why Oslo is saying no to cars in its city center

Related topics: City & Urban, Electric Cars, Pollution

Read this next

Little girl feeds crows; in return, they bring her gifts
Meet Frida, the dog who comes to the rescue whenever disaster strikes
This pregnant dog's photo shoot will make your heart melt
Meet the hoodwinker, a massive sunfish that's been hiding for centuries
It all started when the cat began acting 'weird' ...
Iowa boy builds tiny house in his backyard
Man dies after going swimming with new tattoo
5 body parts you're likely not washing enough

Recommended by Outbrain

0 Comments MNN 1 Login
Recommend 1 Share Sort by Best
Start the discussion…
LOG IN WITH
OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS
Name

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON MNN

Leonardo DiCaprio backs vegan meat company | MNN - Mother Nature Network
4 comments • 4 days ago
Hard Little Machine — there is no such thing as plant based meat

9 can't-miss public markets | MNN - Mother Nature Network
1 comment • 4 days ago
ImdaPrincesse ™/MsWonderFall — Used to be an awesome cultural experience to to Maxwell Street in Chicago in the 70-80's. …

When dogs and cats interrupt yoga | MNN - Mother Nature Network
2 comments • 4 days ago
Hard Little Machine — Clearly the dogs have been trained specifically to do these movements and poses.

Too much stress? Try yoga with an alpaca | MNN - Mother Nature Network
1 comment • 3 days ago
Hard Little Machine — don't they spit?

Subscribe Privacy

TRENDING ON MNN
1 30 minutes of doing just about anything will extend your life. (That includes you, boomers)
2 10 natural cough remedies
3 What's your ikigai? Lifestyle manifesto breaks down life's big question into 4 simple answers
4 A brief and revealing history of the swimsuit
5 Iowa boy builds tiny house in his backyard
6 10 athletes redefining fitness

PLAY IN THE DIRT
Why are my plants turning yellow? A closer look at yellowing leaves on plants can help gardeners get to the root of the problem.
7 surprising facts about dragonflies Like did you know they can fly backward, have almost 360-degree vision and they're ferocious?
What is the best way to get rid of poison ivy? The simplest and best answer is 'very carefully.'
Top 10 vegetables to grow in your garden These nutritional powerhouses can flourish in your yard or in containers.
Good bug, bad bug: How can you tell the difference? Most bugs are harmless, but here's how to tell the good from the bad — plus organic solutions.
Got moles? Read this Don't make a mountain of a literal mole hill. Follow these tips to a mole-free lawn.

Subscribe to our newsletter
Email address Go

Copyright © 2017 NARRATIVE CONTENT GROUP. All rights reserved.