

You need plug-in hybrids, but you need a policy to make them work

07 September 2020 / Theme(s): All articles, Fleet Strategy



Adding plug-in hybrids to your fleet can be a valuable step on the path towards electrification. Provided you recognise the particular requirements to make the equation work.

Today, electric cars are only in the single digits on the European market, a number that needs to go up dramatically if countries are to meet their global emission reduction targets. Fully electric vehicles cannot be the one-car-fits-all solution as long as available models remain limited and charging stations are still few and far between in certain parts of Europe.

“The transition towards low-emission fleets in general relies on a portfolio approach,” said Stéphane Renie, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility. “We’re not going from an almost 100% diesel approach to a 100% battery-electric vehicle approach. During a transition phase that will last at least for the next decade, it will be about making the right choices within the powertrain portfolio.”

Why is it a good idea to go for plug-in hybrids?

- Plug-in hybrids prepare drivers for the transition towards fully electric vehicles, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the technology.
- Plug-in hybrids can help fleets reach CO₂ emission targets.

- Plug-in hybrids are likely not to be affected by existing or future city bans.
- Plug-in hybrids can lower TCO thanks to a decrease in the fuel bill and favourable taxation in some countries

Plug-in hybrids are different

“However, if there’s no strict usage policy for plug-in hybrids, they can turn into a disaster,” warned Mr Renie.

A plug-in hybrid has an electric powertrain, powered by a battery, and an internal combustion engine that kicks in once the battery is depleted. “If the car runs on its ICE engine all the time because the driver doesn’t charge the battery, average fuel consumption could actually be worse than that of a comparable vehicle with only an ICE,” explained Mr Renie.

This extreme case emphasises the importance of driver training to ensure they are on board and they put the effort to charge their vehicle correctly.

“Unfortunately, we are currently seeing many companies who decide to go for PHEV just to be opportunistic and benefit from the tax incentives. When this reason becomes the main driver of the powertrain transition, then the consequences on the overall TCO could turn into a significant increase,” notes Benjamin Huvé, Senior Consultant, EV Expert.

Also, if drivers are expected to charge their PHEV correctly, they also need easy access to chargers, at least at the office and also at home if the usage case requires it.

Driver profiling

Optimal usage is also about ensuring that drivers have the right profile for driving PHEVs. “Drivers should be able to drive their daily commute on the car’s electric motor and only switch to the ICE for trips at the weekend or on holiday,” said Mr Renie.

Telematics are a useful tool to understand the usage of each vehicle by each driver. Mapping drivers allows fleets to provide each driver with the vehicle that has the powertrain that is suited to their needs – and this can mean that drivers with a similar position in the company can have access to entirely different vehicles.

“The worst thing you can do is to go into this unprepared, just to tick a box,” said Mr Renie. “If you put a PHEV into the hands of someone who doesn’t meet the criteria, if you don’t work on their charging discipline and driving behaviour, the equation won’t work. But if you do all those things, adding PHEVs into your fleet can be a very smart move.”

Find out how ALD Automotive can help you add PHEVs to your fleet,
Intelligence Consultancy Department:

please contact our **Business**

[Benjamin Huvé - consultancy@aldautomotive.com](mailto:consultancy@aldautomotive.com)

