Santo domingo electric vehicle adoption

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In the Dominican Republic (DR), the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) is growing. In mid-October, the government delivered 150 electric buses for school transportation. Onesimo Gonz?lez, director of the DR’s Student Transportation System, says this first fleet of eco-friendly, electric school buses - which are equipped with GPS, 360-degree cameras, seatbelts, foldable STOP signs, and a range of 200 kilometers per 100 percent charge - would impact over 160,000 public school students. The vehicles also feature regenerative brakes for consistent and safe operation.

The DR also recently installed the first fast-charging station for electric vehicles in the Caribbean and Latin America. Located in Punta Cana in eastern Dominican Republic, the station has photovoltaic panels, state-of-the-art energy storage, and CCS1 chargers -- the fastest available in the region. With its capacity of 225 kilowatts (kW), it can simultaneously charge 29 electric cars with 100 percent renewable energy. The infrastructure required an investment of over USD 10 million and was developed entirely with Dominican talent.

The Evergo Connect charging station has only been operating for seven months, in which time it has logged an average of 400 monthly users, with a steady growth of five percent month over month. Each user visits the station to charge their vehicle up to four times a month, amounting to around 1,600 charging transactions monthly. Joan F?lix Benitez, Evergo"s senior superintendent of innovation, estimates that the Punta Cana station will serve over 500 regular users.

The electric vehicle market in the Dominican Republic still faces challenges, however, including the need for optimised incentives for EV purchases and improved charging infrastructure in rural areas.

Flores notes that while trends show sustained growth and a gradual shift toward more sustainable mobility, the lack of accurate information and the spread of false news are among the main obstacles to adopting sustainable mobility in the EV realm. Such myths and misinformation can raise doubts among consumers, he says, delaying the transition to cleaner and more efficient mobility.

But what about cost? How do the initial and ongoing maintenance costs of EVs compare with those of internal combustion vehicles in the country? Currently, you can purchase an electric vehicle at roughly the same price as a fuel vehicle of similar quality or size, and several reliable brands are already well established. In terms of maintenance, since EVs have fewer parts that create friction, they require less preventive maintenance.

Flores explains that the first major preventive maintenance for an electric vehicle could be after 15,000 to 20,000 kilometres, compared to about 5,000 kilometres for a combustion vehicle. Preventive maintenance inspections are straightforward, including tyre rotation and checking vehicle fluids (brake fluid, coolant, etc.), resulting in over 70 per cent annual savings on maintenance costs.

In terms of electricity versus fuel consumption, savings are estimated at around 80 percent and, in some cases, as much as 90 percent. The average person spending 12,000 Dominican pesos (about USD 200) on fuel would only spend about 2,000-2,500 pesos (USD 33-42) on energy.

While opinions have changed significantly in recent years thanks to available online information, Flores says that some people still feel uncertain about whether it"s the right time to make the switch.

Fear of change is one of the main reasons most Dominicans don"t purchase electric vehicles, so the Dominican Association of Electric Mobility (ASOMOEDO) hosts events, talks, and forums to inform the public about the benefits of sustainable mobility, encouraging people to consider a hybrid or electric vehicle for their next purchase.

Still, Flores insists, "the perception of electric vehicles in the Dominican Republic is generally positive, especially among those looking for savings and sustainability," but he admits "there are still barriers related to infrastructure, initial cost, and misinformation that hinder widespread adoption."

So, what does the future hold for electric vehicles in the Dominican Republic over the next five to 10 years? Charging infrastructure is key to the success of electric vehicles, so both the private and public sectors are expected to expand it further. In the medium term, the used car market is expected to grow. As more people purchase new electric vehicles, there will be a larger supply of used electric vehicles at more affordable prices.