****

**It’s not just Toyota that’s attracting criticism. For Dan Becker, Director of the Safe Climate Transport Campaign at the Center for Biological Diversity, General Motors is one of the more egregious offenders on this front.**

**“Why do I criticise GM? Because that’s who makes the cars,” says Becker. GM and Toyota are the world’s top-selling automakers by volume, so what they do with their offering has a notable industry impact. “GM has been heading in the wrong direction for a long time, and its statements and pledges about wanting to stop polluting ring rather hollow,” he adds. “It has failed to make vehicles that protect the atmosphere when we’re in the middle of a climate crisis, and it continues to make gas guzzling vehicles.”**

**What GM does, he suggests, others copy. ”There are maybe a dozen or 15 companies in the world that are geared up to make vehicles, and they will all follow GM.”**

**Becker’s battle with automakers in the US has been going on for years. Back in 1989, he started a campaign to try to force them to make more efficient, cleaner vehicles and his work has never stopped. “I would like a law that requires automakers to do what they claim they want to do, which is get out of the business of making gas guzzlers and into the business of making EVs,” he tells *Automotive World*. “They’ve made promises that they will produce vast numbers of EVs, but as of Q3 2022 the annual total stood at just 20,000 units, and at the same time they rolled out several million gas guzzlers.”**

**He believes that mandates, not voluntary measures, are the only way forward: ”Voluntary measures don’t cut it when it comes to reducing pollution, and aspirations are so much hooey. The thing that works is laws, which most auto companies have tried to delay, prevent, and sue to overturn, but ultimately they tend to follow laws.”**

**The main message from campaigners like Industrious Labs and the Safe Climate Transport Campaign is that responsibility falls on the automakers. “There are basically three ways of reducing automotive pollution,” Becker says. One is changing the fuel. Another is making the vehicle itself more efficient so it needs less of whatever source of energy it uses. The third is driving less. As for this last approach, he suggests “the industry and everybody else has failed miserably. We don’t know how to make people drive less. Americans love their cars and, frankly, everybody else tends to follow whatever the US does, whether it’s for good or ill.”**

**That leaves the first two angles of attack. “The auto companies have the responsibility to make their vehicles capable of running on a cleaner fuel and to make the base vehicle more efficient,” he adds. “That means better engines, better transmissions, better aerodynamics and high-strength lightweight material. This is auto mechanics, not rocket science. They know how to do this stuff.”**

**Historically, players have given numerous reasons for a hesitancy to push harder on EVs, including a lack of customer appetite and hefty investment requirements. For Becker, none of them hold water. But hopes for greater automaker momentum could lie elsewhere.**

**Becker is keen to point out various studies predicting near-term price parity between ICE and EVs. Most predictions are linked to the specific ranges of the EVs in question. For instance, the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) published analysis in 2022 concluding that price parity will occur between 2024 and 2026 for 150- to 200-mile range EVs, between 2027 and 2029 for 250- to 300-mile range EVs, and between 2029 and 2033 for 350- to 400-mile range EVs. A *BloombergNEF* study commissioned by Transport & Environment (T&E) projects that in Europe, electric cars and vans will be cheaper to make than fossil-fuel vehicles in every light vehicle segment from 2027 at the latest.**

**Are OEMs moving too slowly on EVs?**

When it comes to electric vehicle launches, environmental campaigners want less talk and more action.

By Megan Lampinen

February 23, 2023

Sales of electric cars are growing rapidly in many markets. Globally, they set a new record at 6.6 million units in 2021, according to the International Energy Agency. That’s nearly double the previous year’s figure, despite supply chain bottlenecks and COVID complications. But could this growth be faster? Many believe it could and should be, and blame the automakers for prioritising easy profits from internal combustion engines (ICE) over environmental responsibilities.

Clean transportation advocates used the opening of the Washington, DC Auto Show in January 2023 to highlight their concerns on this front. Representatives from Public Citizen, Sierra Club, Interfaith Power & Light, and Industrious Labs held a press conference to convey their belief that although many automakers had announced electric vehicle (EV) models, they failed to make most of them readily available.

Toyota was the particular focus of their criticism in the wake of the DC Show, at which it unveiled the 2023 version of its Prius model, now more than 20 years old. While the automaker emerged as a pioneer in the field of hybrids with the Prius, this group accused it of “coasting on an outdated green image,” rejecting EVs and lobbying against zero-emission standards. “While other manufacturers push forward on EVs, Toyota refuses to embrace a US line-up of only zero-emission vehicles before the next decade,” stated East Peterson-Trujillo, a Clean Vehicles

Campaigner at Public Citizen.

In December 2021, Toyota announced a new US$35bn investment that includes plans to launch 30 electric models by 2030. By this time it expects to produce 3.5 million EVs a year, which represents slightly more than one-third of its current sales volumes.

Katherine García, Director of the Sierra Club’s Clean Transportation for All campaign, accused Toyota of “promoting a false image of itself as a leader in sustainability—and yet the manufacturer is re-releasing the Prius and selling its gas-powered Tacomas and Tundras in droves.” In a 2022 study by Greenpeace looking at ten automakers’ decarbonisation efforts, Toyota came in last.

***GM underfire***

**It’s not just Toyota that’s attracting criticism. For Dan Becker, Director of the Safe Climate Transport Campaign at the Center for Biological Diversity, General Motors is one of the more egregious offenders on this front.**

GM was one of the first automakers to develop a battery electric vehicle platform from the ground up and has been pegged as an EV leader by various analysts over the years. Five years ago, the automaker outlined plans to invest US$20bn to develop 20 new EVs by 2023. It later increased that to US$35bn. “Climate change is real, and we want to be part of the solution by putting everyone in an EV,” said Chief Executive Mary Barra in 2021. Developments with the Ultium battery technology promise impressive performance and price benefits. However, Becker suggests GM’s delivery has not lived up to the promise.

GM recently launched an aggressive ad campaign spotlighting its new all-electric line-up, but just two of the five Chevy vehicles featured are available for purchase. It also offers fewer EVs today than rivals Ford, Kia, and Volkswagen. While the company closed reservations for its electric Hummers after they topped 90,000, customers face long wait time as the Hummers are reportedly sold out for two years

or more.

**“Why do I criticise GM? Because that’s who makes the cars,” says Becker. GM and Toyota are the world’s top-selling automakers by volume, so what they do with their offering has a notable industry impact. “GM has been heading in the wrong direction for a long time, and its statements and pledges about wanting to stop polluting ring rather hollow,” he adds. “It has failed to make vehicles that protect the atmosphere when we’re in the middle of a climate crisis, and it continues to make gas guzzling vehicles.”**

**What GM does, he suggests, others copy. ”There are maybe a dozen or 15 companies in the world that are geared up to make vehicles, and they will all follow GM.”**

***Mandates***

**Becker’s battle with automakers in the US has been going on for years. Back in 1989, he started a campaign to try to force them to make more efficient, cleaner vehicles and his work has never stopped. “I would like a law that requires automakers to do what they claim they want to do, which is get out of the business of making gas guzzlers and into the business of making EVs,” he tells *Automotive World*. “They’ve made promises that they will produce vast numbers of EVs, but as of Q3 2022 the annual total stood at just 20,000 units, and at the same time they rolled out several million gas guzzlers.”**

**He believes that mandates, not voluntary measures, are the only way forward: ”Voluntary measures don’t cut it when it comes to reducing pollution, and aspirations are so much hooey. The thing that works is laws, which most auto companies have tried to delay, prevent, and sue to overturn, but ultimately they tend to follow laws.”**

***Tailpipe focus***

EVs primarily address the issue of tailpipe emissions, which are admittedly just one aspect of the move towards low carbon mobility. Industrious Labs has been working to promote cleaner manufacturing of materials like steel and aluminium. “Consumers have chosen EVs, giving American automakers an opportunity to further transform their line-ups with green steel and other sustainable materials,” stated Hilary Lewis, Steel Director at Industrious Labs. “The auto industry plays a significant role in propelling demand for polluting, dirty steel made with coke from coal. US automakers, like their European counterparts, need to start working with steel companies today to procure green steel and put cleaner, all-electric cars on the streets.”

**The main message from campaigners like Industrious Labs and the Safe Climate Transport Campaign is that responsibility falls on the automakers. “There are basically three ways of reducing automotive pollution,” Becker says. One is changing the fuel. Another is making the vehicle itself more efficient so it needs less of whatever source of energy it uses. The third is driving less. As for this last approach, he suggests “the industry and everybody else has failed miserably. We don’t know how to make people drive less. Americans love their cars and, frankly, everybody else tends to follow whatever the US does, whether it’s for good or ill.”**

**That leaves the first two angles of attack. “The auto companies have the responsibility to make their vehicles capable of running on a cleaner fuel and to make the base vehicle more efficient,” he adds. “That means better engines, better transmissions, better aerodynamics and high-strength lightweight material. This is auto mechanics, not rocket science. They know how to do this stuff.”**

***Price parity***

**Historically, players have given numerous reasons for a hesitancy to push harder on EVs, including a lack of customer appetite and hefty investment requirements. For Becker, none of them hold water. But hopes for greater automaker momentum could lie elsewhere.**

**Becker is keen to point out various studies predicting near-term price parity between ICE and EVs. Most predictions are linked to the specific ranges of the EVs in question. For instance, the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) published analysis in 2022 concluding that price parity will occur between 2024 and 2026 for 150- to 200-mile range EVs, between 2027 and 2029 for 250- to 300-mile range EVs, and between 2029 and 2033 for 350- to 400-mile range EVs. A *BloombergNEF* study commissioned by Transport & Environment (T&E) projects that in Europe, electric cars and vans will be cheaper to make than fossil-fuel vehicles in every light vehicle segment from 2027 at the latest.**

If the environmental or moral responsibility arguments have failed to stimulate the desired automakers response, perhaps economics will prove the solution.

https://www.automotiveworld.com/articles/are-oems-moving-too-slowly-on-evs/