Transportation is our largest source of climate pollution in Washington, responsible for almost 45% of emissions. While emissions from passenger vehicles have remained relatively steady, pollution from medium- and heavy-duty (MHD) vehicles has more than doubled.

Currently MHD vehicles primarily use diesel which, in addition to emitting greenhouse gases, emits toxic air pollution. Diesel exhaust is responsible for 70% of the cancer risk from airborne pollutants in Washington. Communities who live near roadways and ports are particularly harmed, and health disparities by race and income are clear.

To improve our health and achieve our climate pollution limits, we must rapidly clean up large vehicles. Research shows that to meet our climate goals, more than a quarter of MHD vehicles on the road in Washington must be zero-emission by 2030—starting from less than 1% of sales today.
Invest Climate Commitment Act revenue in deep pollution cuts

CCA dollars must be spent strategically on climate and clean energy investments to ensure we rapidly reduce emissions and meet our climate goals. We need to invest this funding in projects and programs that substantially cut climate and air pollution to meet the scale of the challenge and reduce cost burden, especially on overburdened communities. Transitioning to zero-emission MHD vehicles is a key way to do this.

This biennium, the legislature should invest:

$130 million in a point-of-sale vehicle incentive program

Providing an incentive at the point of sale enables the greatest participation by mitigating initial costs, while not requiring tax liability or the ability to pay upfront costs. This type of program has been hugely successful in Massachusetts, California, New Jersey, and New York, and should prioritize small businesses and highly polluting sectors, such as school buses and port drayage. This amount aligns with obligations to increase zero-emission MHD sales under the Advanced Clean Truck Rule and we estimate it would incentivize over 1,000 vehicles per year, avoiding about 41,000 tons of CO₂ annually. With a program launch in the second year of the biennium, this amount would support Washington's climate commitments and align with the State Energy Strategy.

$80 million in incentives for MHD charging infrastructure

To transition our vehicles, we need a charging network that is capable of fueling larger vehicles. Fleet operators often need financial and technical assistance for charging installation at depots. This investment would help lay the necessary groundwork for fleet conversion by supporting a charger for roughly every two incentivized vehicles. Exact charging needs depend on individual vehicle or fleet use patterns. Studies show that we will ultimately need one public charging port for every five to ten long-haul vehicles and we will also need private charging; both of these need to be installed to facilitate the vehicle transition, warranting a high ratio in early years.

$40 million in innovative demonstration projects

Washington should lead the way by supporting deployment of earlier-stage zero-emission vehicle applications, such as clean fire trucks and other emergency vehicles, as well as by supporting deployment of zero-emission vehicles in situations that require more assistance, such as for independent truck owner-operators who drive through overburdened communities. This is a great way for the state to show the outcomes of its leadership in passing the CCA. For example, Madison, WI is piloting an electric fire truck - we should do this here, too!

Sources:
4 Climate Solutions, "Transforming Transportation.” https://www.climatesolutions.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/White%20paper%200final.pdf.

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