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Zemo Partnership's Andy Eastlake

Electric vans should be in the spotlight

With all the media noise about electric cars and their ZEV mandate and 2030/35 phase out dates, you might have forgotten that the workhorse of transport, vans, are on the same timeline but arguably with an even more ambitious trajectory!

Around 20 per cent of our road transport carbon emissions come from vans, and that proportion is increasing currently.

But with electric cars currently occupying 16 per cent of the new market (and diesel less than 8 per cent), only 5.2 per cent of new vans this year have been electric (and still over 92 per cent diesel). Progress has slowed too, with a plethora of trade press articles in the last month bemoaning that range is affected by almost every aspect of van operation, driving style, load, route, temperature, towing and plenty more, which of course we all know. Then just last week the webfleet team set a new (official) world record for electric van range of 311 miles, some 50 per cent more than the quoted WLTP range! Demonstrating that all the aspects touted as reducing range, if optimised, can improve range too (in the right hands/feet).

Vans are absolutely more complex than cars as an operational market and having good data on the capabilities under different conditions is even more important in the commercial sector. So, we have to improve that information (together with, of course, the accessibility of charging for vans) if we are to convince this crucial market to embrace the benefits of electric van operation.

Here, recent work by my team at Zemo looking at the information provided by van manufacturers uncovered a significant discrepancy in the quality and transparency of van range (and efficiency) information. Stemming from the fact that vans do not fall under the passenger car labelling regulations, (I guess the clue was in the name) so are not mandated to provide a standardised test range and energy consumption. So, a 'WLTP' range may not have been tested in identical conditions between vehicles.

I'm pleased to say that by highlighting this discrepancy already a number of our members are collaborating to give more consistent figures and to be more transparent with how their test was run. We also find that several commercial vehicle manufactures' have good simulation tools to help customers understand how vehicles will perform in operation. So, while I continue to advocate for consistent core vehicle information, such as the new car label developed 18 years ago by our members. In today's data driven market, the onus now is on operators to gather comprehensive data on what they need (or think they need) from a vehicle. Then talk to the many experts available to help find a 'system', of vehicles, infrastructure, energy, and operation, that meet their actual needs.

So, whilst we do need to put vans and their information in the spotlight, perhaps operators and their 'data' need to be in it too.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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