- Transportation

The green leap of QC – Transitioning to electric buses

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City has once again taken a significant step for the environment and its residents by recently rolling out six brand-new electric buses as part of its Libreng Sakay program. These electric buses complement the 90 existing buses currently servicing various routes in Quezon City, providing free and sustainable transportation for QCitizens.

In addition to being eco-friendly, the electric buses have a seating capacity of 41 passengers and additional standing room for commuters. To ensure passenger safety, they feature air-conditioning, Wi-Fi, CCTV cameras, handrails, and fire suppression systems. The buses are also persons with disabilities or PWD-friendly, featuring wheelchair ramps for accessibility.

Quezon City is the only city in the Philippines offering free bus rides to its constituents, making transportation more accessible and affordable for its residents. Now, the city is pioneering electric buses, further cementing its commitment to sustainability and public welfare. The introduction of electric buses not only contributes to reducing air pollution and improving the city's environmental footprint but also ensures that residents continue to enjoy free rides – a much-needed benefit, especially in the face of rising transportation costs. This forward-thinking initiative positions Quezon City as a leader in eco-friendly and inclusive urban mobility.

This initiative of the Quezon City government aligns with the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act (EVIDA), also known as Republic Act 11697, which mandates that local government units (LGUs) integrate at least 5 percent of electric vehicles (EVs) into their fleets. Signed into law in April 2022, EVIDA establishes a comprehensive policy framework to promote the adoption of EVs and foster a sustainable EV industry in the Philippines. Central to the law is the formulation of the Comprehensive Roadmap for the Electric Vehicle Industry (CREVI), which sets the foundation for EV infrastructure, standards, and support systems. The law offers incentives, such as tax breaks and exemptions to manufacturers, importers, and users of EVs. It also requires commercial and government fleets to meet minimum EV quotas and mandates the installation of charging stations in parking areas and other strategic locations. By reducing dependence on fossil fuels, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and advancing sustainable transportation, EVIDA aims to build a cleaner and more eco-friendly future for the country.

LGUs have yet to fully implement the new law. However, the global trend is shifting toward the adoption of electric buses, driven by the urgent need to address climate change. The increasing use of electric buses reflects a growing recognition of the importance of eco-friendly transportation, especially in the face of global warming, which has exacerbated extreme weather events like typhoons, impacting many countries worldwide.

Electric buses first gained prominence in China, and within a few years, other countries began adopting the technology. In Europe, electric bus registrations increased by 48 percent in 2021 compared to 2020, and the market continued to grow, expanding by 26 percent in 2022. Globally, the use of electric buses has become a significant trend, reflecting the push toward cleaner and more sustainable public transportation.

China's highly supportive government policies have positioned the country as the world's largest market for electric buses, accounting for more than 95 percent of the global stock. At

the end of 2022, BBC News reported that China's Ministry of Transport classified over three-quarters (77 percent or 542,600) of all urban buses in the country as "new energy vehicles." This term encompasses pure electric, plug-in hybrids, and fuel cell vehicles powered by alternative fuels, such as hydrogen and methanol. Notably, 84 percent of China's new energy bus fleet in 2022 consisted of purely electric vehicles.

Electric buses are rapidly becoming the preferred choice for road mass transportation, offering numerous benefits that make them an attractive solution to urban transportation challenges. One of the most significant advantages is the environmental impact. Electric buses produce zero tailpipe emissions, which greatly reduces air pollution and improves air quality in cities. Additionally, they contribute to the fight against climate change by lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

From an economic perspective, electric buses are cost-effective in the long term. While their initial purchase price is higher than diesel buses, the operating costs are significantly lower due to cheaper electricity and reduced maintenance requirements. Furthermore, the development of electric bus infrastructure and manufacturing can generate employment opportunities across various sectors.

The health benefits of electric buses are equally compelling. By reducing air pollution, they help improve respiratory health for urban residents. Moreover, their quieter operation compared to diesel buses results in less noise pollution, creating a more pleasant and livable urban environment.

Electric buses also drive technological advancements. Their adoption promotes innovation in areas, such as battery technology, charging infrastructure, and smart city solutions. Additionally, they are more energy-efficient, converting a higher percentage of stored energy into movement compared to internal combustion engines.

There are significant social benefits as well. Electric buses improve the public transportation experience by offering modern features, such as Wi-Fi, air conditioning, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Additionally, they promote greater awareness of sustainability, encouraging communities to adopt more eco-friendly practices.

Quezon City is on the right track in pioneering the implementation of the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act (EVIDA), aligning itself with the global shift toward electric buses. As the city embraces this eco-friendly transportation solution, it is setting an example for other major Philippine cities to follow. This move not only supports green technology but also contributes to a more sustainable, environmentally friendly mass transport system. Adopting electric buses is a crucial step toward a safer environment for future generations, as the world commits to reducing carbon emissions. We hope that more cities in the Philippines will embrace this change, helping create a cleaner, greener future for all.