**29 Electric vehicles won’t solve the real problem with cars**

Earlier this month, CNN’ anchors put the same incredulous question to the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates: ‘Are we all going to have to drive electric cars now?’ […] If Americans drive their electric cars as much as they do their current gas guzzlers, it would cancel out the carbon reduction brought on by electrification.

[…] It’s a common refrain that the transportation sector is now the greatest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, making up 29 percent of U.S. emissions in 2017. With 75 percent of Americans still driving to work by themselves, changing over to electric cars looks like a promising step for reducing emissions. But a host of timing and technical challenges stand in the way. Many electric vehicle skeptics note that the vehicles themselves are resource-intensive to manufacture, and electric cars take about twice as much energy to build as a traditional internal combustion car. And Americans will need to reckon with two big facts: the population is growing, and people are driving more.

[…] “Electrification is important,” says Scott Goldstein, the policy director of Transportation for America. “But if you trust the scientists who say we have only 11 years to avoid the worst effects of climate change, then we can’t wait until 2030.” Urbanization itself reduces driving. One study found that urban millennials travel on average 24 miles per day by car, compared with their rural peers’ average of 35 miles a day. And more densely developed housing means fewer vehicle miles traveled per household, so rethinking land use—and resisting sprawl—has to be part of any decarbonization regime.

“The easiest and cheapest thing to do is drive just a little bit less,” Goldstein says. “We could do that today. We could build our communities, suburbs, and cities to be safer, more convenient for people to get around without having to drive. You can build downtowns where you only have to park once […] Or a grocery store can build parking behind the store, away from the street, so people are more inclined to walk in rather than drive.”

Minneapolis is teaming up with St. Paul to launch the first municipally owned electric carsharing system designed to complement transit. “We really think car-sharing will shed singleoccupant, self-owned cars and postpone the buying of an individual vehicle,” says the executive director of East Metro Strong, a transit advocacy group. “One shared vehicle takes about eight to 11 private cars off the road.” He adds: “Once you don’t have the car in your driveway, you tend to walk or you ride transit, or use a car for less of your journey.” […]

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