Hong Kong Health Advocates Quantify Air Pollution's Economic Toll

The Departments for Community and Family Medicine at Hong Kong University and Chinese University together with the think-tank Civic Exchange released a new study that outlines air pollution's economic toll to the City of Hong Kong.

They estimated that $1.5 billion HK could be saved per year in tangible health-care costs, $500 million HK could be saved in productivity lost due to pollution-related illness and $19 billion HK in intangible costs, including the value of lost lives. In addition, 64,000 hospital "bed days" and 6.8 million family doctor visits could be avoided if stronger policy measures were taken to reduce air pollution.

Altogether, improvements to air quality could bring benefits of more than $20 billion HK to Hong Kong each year.

thestandard.com.hk

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Launches New Pedestrian Safety Campaign

The San Francisco Police and Health Departments have launched a new $190,000 campaign for pedestrian safety. The year-long campaign will include a $90,000 education and media

blitz targeting out-of-town drivers and aggressive motorists as well as added enforcement to protect pedestrians.

The police department has dedicated nineteen officers to this effort for an entire year. The officers on the beat will be issuing $155

citations to drivers who endanger walkers by speeding, running red lights, failing to stop at a stop sign or who simply violate a pedestrian's right of way.

Officials from the San Francisco's Department of Public Health hope the radio and billboard ads, part of the education and media blitz, will influence all drivers to modify their behavior even before a ticket is necessary.

Last year San Francisco had 15 traffic fatalities, eight of which were pedestrians.

cbs5.com

INDIA

Chennai India seeks Bus Rapid Transit

Pasumai Thayagam, a voluntary organization in Chennai, India, launched a campaign on World Environment Day, to urge the State Government to solve the city's traffic and transportation problems.

The group has drafted an appeal to increase the number of Metropolitan Transport Corporation buses from 2,773 to 5,000 and put in place a bus rapid transit (BRT) system. Thousands of appeal forms have been circulated to residents of every ward in the city, said Pasumai Thayagam's State Secretary E. Arul. The appeal also requests better pedestrian paths and safer conditions for cycling.

Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), a local political party, strongly supports Pasumai Thayagam's proposal. PMK believes BRT can reduce traffic congestion in the city and is a better alternative to a current monorail proposal. The PMK also agrees on the need for a separate track for bikes on all roads.

The campaign for BRT in Chennai comes in the midst of growing interest by Indian transport officials for feasible, non-metrorail alternatives that would address the country's growing mobility needs.

hindu.com

LONDON

London to Begin Cutting CO2 Emissions with Congestion Charging

London's Mayor, Ken Livingstone, has asked Transport for London (TfL) to produce proposals to amend the current congestion charging scheme so that it encourages drivers to switch to cars with low levels of CO2 emissions. The changes would involve discounts for cars with low CO2 emissions and substantially higher charges for cars with high levels of CO2 emissions within the congestion charge zone.

"The congestion charge has been a huge success in reducing traffic levels," says Mayor Livingstone. "I now want Transport for London to bring forward plans to build on the success

of congestion charging to encourage drivers in London to purchase a low emission vehicle."

Under this new proposal, most cars would continue driving in the zone at the present rate of £8 per day, while those vehicles with very high CO2 emissions—such as those which produce over 226g/km of CO2 emissions, could be charged at a higher rate of up to £25.

london.gov.uk