

Nissan chief pitches electric taxis to Hong Kong

September 12 2012, by Kelvin Chan

(AP)—Nissan President Carlos Ghosn met Wednesday with Hong Kong's leader to pitch a proposal for the Japanese car maker to supply electric taxis to the southern Chinese city.

Ghosn's visit with Leung Chun-ying is part of an effort to sell Nissan's electric taxi technology to cities around the world looking to upgrade their taxi fleets to more environmentally friendly models.

Earlier this year, New York City chose Nissan's van-like NV200 to replace older models starting October 2013, with an electric version on the cards for 2017.

Ghosn said he "proposed to offer a solution for Hong Kong, particularly into taxis or fleets" and Leung seemed "very interested." He gave few other details.

Hong Kong's 18,000 Toyota taxis are powered by liquefied petroleum gas. They were launched in 2001 and many are due to be replaced in the next two to three years.

Environmental and transportation officials are examining the feasibility of replacing the taxis with electric vehicles in a bid to reduce the city's frequently heavy [air pollution](#). The government has provided subsidies for pilot projects of electric taxi models by other carmakers including China's BYD Co.

[Nissan Motor](#) Co. is also planning electric taxi tests in the Chinese cities of Wuhan and Guangzhou.

Nissan is considered a leader in the electric car industry and its Leaf was the first all-electric vehicle sold in the U.S. The company is targeting global sales of 1.5 million electric vehicles by 2015 in conjunction with alliance partner Renault SA.

Winning the Hong Kong taxi contract could boost Nissan's electric ambitions in China, which has set a goal of creating a world-beating electric [car industry](#). The Chinese government has set bold targets for the development of the industry, including sales of 5 million [electric vehicles](#) by 2020, though it has scaled back its ambitions after facing technological hurdles and lack of buyer interest.

While Hong Kong is an ideal place for electric taxis because its compact geography means drivers wouldn't have to worry about getting too far from charging stations, the carmaker needs to figure out how to develop charging infrastructure, said Executive Vice President Andy Palmer.

The city has only six fast charging stations, so Nissan is thinking about donating more and setting up a test fleet, Palmer said.

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