

December 9, 2022

“The Motorcycle Industry’s Vision for Decarbonization”

Tuesday morning, the Motorcycle Riders Foundation attended a panel by the European Association of Motorcycle Manufacturers. The discussion centered on “The Motorcycle Industry’s Vision for Decarbonization.” As in the United States, there is a growing movement to shift away from carbon-based fuel and toward decarbonization and elimination of emissions.

While motorcycle emissions account for less than 1% of all emissions in Europe, the motorcycle industry is taking a proactive approach to the future of fueling their transportation system. Regulators in Europe have already set 2035 as the deadline for the ban on the sale of new cars with internal combustion engines. So far, motorcycles have escaped such a ban, but there is little doubt they will come under the microscope of regulators soon.

European motorcycle manufacturers see the writing on the wall and are navigating a potentially complex set of rules and regulations. Two camps have formed within Europe on the topic, one camp focused on strict regulations including the banning of combustion engines and picking winners and losers for which technologies will replace what is on the road today. The second camp is focused on market-based solutions, allowing all technologies to compete, that in theory will lead to the most efficient and cost-effective technologies winning out. Some of the new technology being discussed includes electric bikes, swappable batteries, synthetic fuels, hydrogen fuel cells and hybrid powertrains.

There is also a fear in Europe that other regions of the world have already taken the lead in this technology and Europe is playing catch up. Specifically, the electric car industry and the success of brands like Tesla in the United States has Europeans concerned. European motorcycle firms want to be the leaders in the future of motorcycle technology. European advances in fueling and swappable battery projects could help solve the problem of range and lack of charging infrastructure that is the Achilles heel of electric transportation.

Why does this matter to bikers in America? Europe has over 40 manufacturing facilities and 35 research and development sites across the continent. They are taking a forward leaning approach and have stated their goal to be industry leaders. If Europe chooses a market-based approach and allows the development of a wide variety of technologies American manufacturers may end of playing catch up.

While Europe and the United States have different views on many topics, it was great to hear the closing message from the panel in Europe. “Motorcycles are not part of the problem; they are part of the solution.” We at the Motorcycle Riders Foundation couldn’t agree more.