Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management

Below is the English translation of the Parliamentary letter from the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management to the House of Representatives on the progress of the heavy goods vehicle charge in the Netherlands (Parliamentary Paper 31305 no. 327). The report on Exploration of Electric Road Systems will soon also be translated into English and accessed via the website www.vrachtwagenheffing.nl.

The Hague, 19 April 2021

Dear President,

In my letter of 29 June 2020 (Parliamentary Paper 31305, no. 314) I informed you about a number of studies and provided a status report on the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge.

As promised in that letter, I hereby send the House of Representatives the result of two additional studies. It concerns two reports on the expected impact of the measures to improve logistical efficiency and on the exploration of dynamic charging possibilities for electric trucks by means of so-called Electric Road Systems. Both studies were conducted in the context of "revenue recycling": using the net proceeds from the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge to invest in sustainability and innovation of the transport sector. I would also like to update the House on the latest developments with regard to the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge.

Study on the impact of measures for logistical efficiency

In the study on the impact of the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge on traffic safety, which the House received earlier, calculations by the SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research show a theoretical increase of up to two traffic fatalities. This has to do with the possibility that truck drivers may be tempted to change their routes in favour of roads without a heavy goods vehicle charge. Because I think it is essential to prevent this increase from becoming a reality, I commissioned a study, as I said in my previous letter, on the expected impact of the measures to improve logistical efficiency (Attachment 1). Increased logistical efficiency will lead to a decrease in heavy vehicle traffic on the road, which in turn will have a positive effect on traffic safety and will help lower emissions and congestion. As stated in the letter of June 2020, the SWOV calculated that it would take a kilometre reduction for trucks of approx. 2.5% in order to neutralise the calculated effect of the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge on traffic safety. Based on the study on logistical efficiency, we can conclude that this reduction can be realised through the proposed revenue recycling measures in the area of logistical efficiency.

Exploration of Electric Road Systems

An exploratory study of dynamic charging of electrical trucks by means of so-called Electric Road System (ERS) was performed in the context of the transition to sustainable road transport (Attachment 2). ERS is a collective term for different technologies that allow vehicles to run on electricity by allowing them to get their power supply from the road infrastructure and charge their batteries while they are driving. This technology is already being tested in practice on a small scale in Germany. The study explored the extent to which the use of ERS in road traffic in the Netherlands would be an attractive option to help us achieve our climate objectives. The study compared diesel and LNG vehicles with battery electric vehicles with a fuel cell, with a large battery, with vehicles powered by an overhead line, and with diesel hybrid variations. The study concludes that dynamic charging with an overhead line has the potential, just like other sustainable solutions for road traffic, to help the Netherlands achieve its climate objectives, but that there is still too much uncertainty at this time to express a preference for one of the concepts.

Schedule
As you know, I submitted the bill for the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge to the Council of State for advice in the summer of 2020. In the meantime, the Follow-Up Report has been drawn up and the bill has been amended accordingly. It will be up to the next government to make a decision about this bill and about the conclusion of an administrative agreement on revenue recycling. The purpose of this administrative agreement is to enter into agreements with the three parties in the sector (evofenedex, TLN and VERN) about using the net proceeds from the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge for sustainability and innovation of the transport sector.

During the past few years, preparations for the implementation of the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge have been going on in tandem with the preparation of the bill. The implementation can commence as soon as the bill is adopted. The activities during the implementation phase include the tendering process, construction, integration and testing of ICT systems, setting up the implementation organisation and supply chain management, contracting with and accreditation of service providers and educating users. The revenue recycling measures will be prepared in tandem with the charge system, so both will be able to take effect simultaneously. The implementation phase consists of two important steps, namely the preparations for the tenders and the tendering process up to and including awarding the tenders (approx. 1.5 to 2 years), followed by the implementation of systems and services, including testing (approx. 2 to 2.5 years). To the best of our knowledge at this time, the Heavy Goods Vehicle Charge will be able to go into effect approx. four years after completion of the parliamentary debate on the bill.

Yours sincerely,
MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE EN WATERMANAGEMENT,

Mrs. drs. C. van Nieuwenhuizen Wijbenga