Multi-criteria analysis of alternative-fuel buses for public transportation

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Abstract

The technological development of buses with new alternative fuels is considered in this paper. Several types of fuels are considered as alternative-fuel modes, i.e., electricity, fuel cell (hydrogen), and methanol. Electric vehicles may be considered the alternative-fuel vehicles with the lowest air pollution. Hybrid electric vehicles provide an alternate mode, at least for the period of improving the technology of electric vehicles. A hybrid electric vehicle is defined as a vehicle with the conventional internal combustion engine and an electric motor as its major sources of power. Experts from different decision-making groups performed the multiple attribute evaluation of alternative vehicles. AHP is applied to determine the relative weights of evaluation criteria. TOPSIS and VIKOR are compared and applied to determine the best compromise alternative fuel mode. The result shows that the hybrid electric bus is the most suitable substitute bus for Taiwan urban areas in the short and median term. But, if the cruising distance of the electric bus extends to an acceptable range, the pure electric bus could be the best alternative.

1. Introduction

In the last two decades of the 20th century, there was growing concern about pollution in major cities, and in particular about the large contribution made by road transportation sources to this problem (McNicol et al., 2001). Government legislation on ICE emissions and fuel quality substantially improved the air quality in cities through reduction in regulated pollutants. For example, in the United States, California introduced the so-called ‘zero-emission vehicles (ZEV) mandate’, which called for 2% of all new vehicles offered for sale in California in model years 1998–2000 to be ZEVs. Initially, it was intended that such vehicles would be battery-powered electric vehicles (EVs). Owing to the limitation of EVs development, the regulations were relaxed to allow additional time for the technology to develop. During the development period, alternative-fuel vehicles were also considered. The advantages of HEVs are regeneration of braking energy, engine shutdown instead of idling, and engine driving under high-load conditions; these advantages are more noticeable in city driving. The key weakness of EVs, on the other hand, is that time is needed to recharge the batteries (Morita, 2003). The bus system possesses such features as stable depot, route, group of commuter, time of operation, and frequency, so that the research on finding alternative-fuel modes for public transportation is of high interest. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the best alternative-fuel buses suitable for the urban area and to explore the potential direction of development in the future.

The trends of the latest worldwide technological developments of a bus with new alternative fuel are considered in this paper. Morita (2003) thought that the leading types of automobiles in the 21st century are likely to be of the following four types: internal combustion engine vehicles (ICEVs), hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), electric vehicles (EVs), and fuel cell vehicles (FCVs). McNicol et al. (2001) pointed out that the principal competitors of FCVs are EVs, HEVs, and advanced conventional ICE-powered vehicles (ICEVs).
Based on the literature mentioned above, several types of fuel are considered as alternative-fuel modes, i.e., EVs, HEVs, fuel cell (hydrogen), methanol, natural gas (Morita, 2003; McNicol et al., 2001; Sperling, 1995).

Current researches about alternative-fuel vehicles are well grounded. The scope of research includes the direction of development (Morita, 2003; Harding, 1999), comparison of alternative-fuel vehicles (Maggetto and Van Mierlo, 2001; Johnson and Ahman, 2002), impact evaluation (Kazimi, 1997; Matheny et al., 2002; Brodrick et al., 2002; Zhou and Sperling, 2001; Kempton and Kubo, 2000), batteries (Moseley, 1999), policy (Nesbitt and Sperling, 1998), costs (DeLucchi et al., 2002; DeLucchi and Lipman, 2001), market (Sperling et al., 1995), etc. Most of the research focuses on comparing and describing the performance of single or several types of alternative-fuel vehicles.

In addition, some research is related to the evaluation of alternative fuel. Poh and Ang (1999) applied forward and backward analytic hierarchy process (AHP) to analyze the transportation fuels and policy for Singapore. Winebrake and Creswick (2003) also applied AHP to evaluate the future of hydrogen fueling systems for transportation. Both of these teams utilize scenario analysis to build their evaluation model.

A similar approach is applied in this current research. In this paper, alternative fuels are considered for their potential to displace oil as the main and only source of transport fuel. The characteristics of buses are suitable for using such fuels in populated modern cities. Therefore, evaluating a moderate fuel mode for buses in urban area is the purpose of this research.

The evaluation of alternative-fuel buses should be considered from various aspects; for example, energy efficiency, emissions, technologies, costs, facilities and so on. The multi-attribute evaluation process is thus used in this paper. The AHP is used to determine the weights of evaluation criteria. The AHP, introduced by Saaty (1980), is known as a pairwise comparison method and a popular method in evaluation problems. There is a lot of research on the application of decision analysis techniques to transportation, energy and environmental planning, such as the researches of Tzeng et al. (1992, 1994), Tzeng and Tsaur (1993, 1997). TOPSIS and VIKOR (see Appendices A and B) are compared and used to rank the alternative-fuel buses. The details of these two methods are shown in Section 5. The multi-attribute evaluation of alternative buses was performed by the experts from different decision making groups, such as bus users, the social community, and the operators. The selection of the best fuel mode has to be done according to several competing (conflicting) criteria. This decision-making problem has no solution satisfying all criteria simultaneously. The compromise solution of the problem of conflicting criteria should be determined, and the criteria could help the decision makers to reach their final decision. The compromise ranking method is applied to determine the best compromise alternative-fuel bus. For testing and verifying the usability of this methodology, we illustrate the evaluation of alternative-fuel buses of Taiwan urban areas as an empirical example. The results can prove the effectiveness of this method and illustrate the directions for future development and the weakness of the best alternative, which make it easy to implement in the future.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the types of alternative-fuel buses evaluated in this research; Sections 3 and 4 introduce the procedure of generation and evaluation of criteria and alternatives; the evaluation methodologies, results and discussions are shown in Section 5, and the final section contains conclusions and recommendations.

2. Alternative solutions

The main parameter in defining alternative solutions is the fuel mode. According to the data collected in this study, the alternatives are classified into four groups: the conventional diesel engine, the new mode of alternative fuel, the electric vehicle, and the hybrid electric vehicle. There is a vigorous worldwide effort to develop a transportation means utilizing new alternative fuels, including methanol, fuel cell (hydrogen), and compressed natural gas. The electric vehicle operating on electricity is of high interest, but the appropriate technology is still developing. The advantages of EVs are that they perform efficiently under low-load conditions, and do not discharge any pollutants during use (Morita, 2003). Their key weakness is that time is needed to recharge the batteries. In addition, disadvantages such as a short cruising distance (usually less than 200 km) and lack of support infrastructure significantly reduce their convenience (Morita, 2003). The hybrid electric vehicle, which retains both the electric motor and internal combustion engine, has been widely accepted by the users (Griffith and Gleason, 1996; Harding, 1999; McNicol et al., 2001; Maggetto and Van Mierlo, 2001). Morita (2003) pointed out that HEVs have the potential to rank alongside conventional vehicles in terms of cost and convenience. The advantages of HEVs are regeneration of braking energy, engine shutdown instead of idling, and engine driving under high-load conditions; these advantages are more noticeable in city driving. The advantages of HEVs are that they can incorporate any type of internal combustion engine, or fuel cells and show good efficiency, no matter what type of fuel the engine uses. In this paper, the following alternatives are considered: gasoline-electric, diesel-electric, CNG electric, and LPG electric. Based on the global development results, 12 alternatives
of fuel mode are considered, and the features of each alternative-fuel mode are described in this paper.

2.1. Conventional diesel engine

The conventional diesel engine bus is employed by the Taiwanese transportation companies. In fact, the diesel engine is the most efficient of all existing internal combustion engines, making it one of the major contenders as a power source in the 21st century (Morita, 2003). It is introduced in the set of alternatives in order to compare it with the new fuel modes.

2.2. Compressed natural gas—CNG

Natural gas is used in several forms as vehicle fuel, i.e., compressed natural gas (CNG), liquid natural gas (LNG), and attached natural gas (ANG). The CNG vehicle has already been commercialized around the world and is matured in its technology (there are about four million CNG vehicles in the world). The compressed natural gas vehicle is widespread in countries with their own natural gas. CNG vehicles emit only slight amounts of carbon dioxide and have high-octane value; thus they are suitable for utilization as public transportation vehicles (Sperling, 1995). The natural gas supply, distribution, and safety are the most urgent issues needing improvement.

2.3. Liquid propane gas—LPG

There are countries that have used this mode of fuel for public transportation. In Japan, Italy, and Canada, as much as 7% of the buses are powered by LPG (Sperling, 1995), and some European countries are planning to employ LPG vehicles, due to pollution considerations.

2.4. Fuel cell (hydrogen)

The so-called fuel cell battery can transform hydrogen and oxygen into power for vehicles (Sperling, 1995); however, hydrogen is not suitable for onboard storage (Morita, 2003). The research on a fuel cell-hydrogen bus has already been concluded with success, and test results with the experimental vehicle operating on hydrogen fuel indicate that this vehicle has a broad surface in the burning chamber, low burning temperature, and the fuel is easily inflammable (DeLucchi, 1989). Daimler–Benz Company has already developed a prototype vehicle with a fuel cell. To date, the only vehicles offered for sale with fuel cell technology is the Zevo London taxi which was launched in London in July 1998 (Harding, 1999). Due to the fact that the energy to operate this vehicle comes from the chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen, no detrimental substance is produced and only pure water, in the form of air, is emitted. A fully loaded fuel tank can last as far as 250 km.

2.5. Methanol

The research of methanol is related to vehicles with gasoline engines. The combination rate of methanol in the fuel is 85% (so-called M85). The engine that can use this fuel with different combination rates is termed as flexible fuel vehicle (FFV). The FFV engine can run smoothly with any combination rate of gas with methanol, and methanol will act as an alternative fuel and help to reduce the emission of black smoke and nitrous oxides (NOx). Fuel stations providing methanol are already available in Japan since 1992 (Sperling, 1995). The thermal energy of methanol is lower than that of gasoline, and the capability of continuous traveling by this vehicle is inferior to conventional vehicles. Furthermore, the aldehyde compound that comes along with burning methanol forms a strong acid, and the researchers should pay more attention to this fuel mode.

2.6. Electric vehicle—opportunity charging

The source of power for the opportunity charging electric vehicle (OCEV) is the combination of a loaded battery and fast opportunity charging during the time the bus is idle when stopped. Whenever the bus starts from the depot, its loaded battery will be fully charged. During the 10–20s when the bus is stopped, the power reception sensor on the electric bus (installed under the bus) will be lowered to the charging supply plate installed in front of the bus stop to charge the battery. Within 10s of a stop, the battery is charged with 0.15 kWh power (depending on the design of power supply facility), and the power supplied is adequate for it to move to the next bus stop.

2.7. Direct electric charging

This type of electric bus is in the prototype design stage. The power for this vehicle comes mainly from the loaded battery. Once the battery power is insufficient, the vehicle will have to return to the plant to conduct recharging. The development of a suitable battery is critical for this mode of vehicle. If a greater amount of electricity can be stored in the battery, the cruising distance by this vehicle will increase.

2.8. Electric bus with exchangeable batteries

The objective of an electric bus with an exchangeable battery is to effect a fast battery charge and to achieve a longer cruising distance. The bus is modified to create more on-board battery space and the number of on-
board batteries is adjusted to meet the needs of different routes. The fast exchanging facility has to be ready to conduct a rapid battery exchange so that the vehicle mobility can be maintained.

2.9. Hybrid electric bus with gasoline engine

The electric-gasoline vehicle has an electric motor as its major sources of power and a small-sized gasoline engine. When electric power fails, the gasoline engine can take over and continue the trip. The kinetic energy rendered during the drive will be turned into electric power to increase the vehicles’ cruising distance.

2.10. Hybrid electric bus with diesel engine

The electric–diesel vehicle has an electric motor and small-sized diesel engine as its major sources of power. When electric power fails, the diesel engine can take over and continue the trip, while the kinetic energy rendered during the drive will be turned into electric power to increase the vehicles’ cruising distance.

2.11. Hybrid electric bus with CNG engine

The electric-CNG vehicle has an electric motor and a small-sized CNG engine as its major sources of power. When electric power fails, the CNG engine takes over and provides the power, with the kinetic energy produced converted to electric power to permit continuous travel.

2.12. Hybrid electric bus with LPG engine

The electric-LPG vehicle has an electric motor and a small-sized LPG engine as its major sources of power. When electric power fails, the LPG engine takes over and provides the power, with the kinetic energy produced converted to electric power to permit continuous travel.

3. Evaluation criteria

According to the papers described above, we established the evaluation criteria in Section 3.1 and assess the criteria weight in Section 3.2.

3.1. Establishing the evaluation criteria

The evaluation of alternative fuel modes can be performed according to different aspects. Four aspects of evaluation criteria are considered in this paper: social, economic, technological, and transportation. In order to evaluate the alternatives, 11 evaluation criteria are established, as follows:

1. **Energy supply**: This criterion is based on the yearly amount of energy that can be supplied, on the reliability of energy supply, the reliability of energy storage, and on the cost of energy supply.

2. **Energy efficiency**: This criterion represents the efficiency of fuel energy.

3. **Air pollution**: This criterion refers to the extent a fuel mode contributes to air pollution, since vehicles with diverse modes of fuel impact on air differently.

4. **Noise pollution**: This criterion refers to the noise produced during the operation of the vehicle.

5. **Industrial relationship**: The conventional vehicle industry is a locomotive industry, and it is intricately related to other industrial production; the relationship of each alternative to other industrial production is taken as the criterion.

6. **Costs of implementation**: This criterion refers to the costs of production and implementation of alternative vehicles.

7. **Costs of maintenance**: The maintenance costs for alternative vehicles are the criterion.

8. **Vehicle capability**: This criterion represents the cruising distance, slope climbing, and average speed.

9. **Road facility**: This criterion refers to the road features needed for the operation of alternative vehicles (like pavement, and slope).

10. **Speed of traffic flow**: This criterion refers to the comparison of the average speed of alternative vehicles for certain traffic. If the speed of traffic flow is higher than the vehicle speed, the vehicle would not be suitable to operate on certain routes.

11. **Sense of comfort**: This criterion refers to the particular issue regarding sense of comfort, and to the fact that users tend to pay attention to the accessories of the vehicle (air-conditioning, automatic door, etc.).

3.2. Assessment of criteria weights

In the assessment of criteria weights, the relevant decision-making experts participating were from the electric bus manufacturing, academic institutes, research organization, and bus operations sectors. They assessed the relative importance (subjectively) for each of the criteria. The average values of weights are presented in Table 1. This data show that the speed of traffic is the most important factor in evaluating the alternative vehicles; second in importance is air pollution, indicating the need for new alternative-fuel modes.
Good analytical procedure requires making histograms of the data, to check the form of their distribution, before proceeding with multi-criteria analysis. If the data are not normally distributed, and the standard deviation is not small, the sensitivity analysis covering the range of weights should be performed within the multi-criteria decision-making procedure.

4. Evaluation of the alternatives

The evaluation approach applied in this paper is based on the assessment by the professional experts. The average assessed value for alternative \( j \) according to criterion \( i \) is determined by the relation

\[
f_{ij} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{l=1}^{N} u_{lij},
\]

where \( u_{lij} \) is the performance value given by expert \( l \) to the alternative \( j \) according to criterion \( i \), \( N \) is the number of experts participating in the evaluation process. The “value function” \( u \) has the following properties: \( 0 \leq u \leq 1 \), and \( u_{ij} > u_{ik} \) means that the alternative \( j \) is better than the alternative \( k \) according to criterion \( i \).

The selection of the expert group members is of extreme importance in the evaluation process of the MCA/MCDM problem. The selection of alternative-fuel buses is a problem related to the public affairs, and credible experts for evaluating this problem are really important. In Taiwan, experts from manufacturing industries, and related departments of government, academics, and research institutes, are acknowledged as credible experts. For this reason, the experts were invited from the Transportation Bureau of Taipei City, Environmental Protection Administration, the Transportation Institute of the Ministry of Communications, Vehicle Association, Energy Committee, and research personnel on electric vehicles. The investigation information found in previous researches (emissions of black smoke, the capability of continuous traveling) was the basic reference information, and it was listed in the questionnaire prepared for the experts. Within the evaluation process (Delphi method), the evaluation results were presented to the experts for the second evaluation. They had to reconsider the performance values of each alternative-fuel mode and to re-evaluate the alternatives. Seventeen valid questionnaires were retrieved from the evaluation process.

The evaluation results following the second evaluation are presented in Table 2. According to the energy supply criterion, the average performance value is the highest for the diesel bus (0.820), and the lowest for the hydrogen bus (0.360). With respect to energy efficiency, the average performance values are very high for the electric vehicles. The average performance values for electric vehicles are the highest according to air pollution and noise pollution, but the values are very low according to the capability of the vehicle and needed road facility. Analyzing the data from Table 2, we can conclude that the electric vehicle rates very good according to the criteria of energy, environmental impact, industrial relationship, and implementation cost; the transportation mode using conventional diesel rates high according to the vehicle capability and needed (new) road features; whereas the transportation mode using natural gas, methanol and hydrogen are associated with the “middle” values.

5. Multi-criteria optimization

The MCDM methods VIKOR and TOPSIS are based on an aggregating function representing closeness to the reference point(s). For the details of these two methods, please refer to Tzeng and Opricovic (2003), which are summarized in Appendices A and B. These two methods introduce different forms of aggregating function \( L_p \) metric for ranking. The VIKOR method introduces \( Q_j \) as a function of \( L_1 \) and \( L_\infty \), whereas the TOPSIS
method introduces $C_j^*$ as a function of $L_2$. They use different kinds of normalization to eliminate the units of criterion functions: the VIKOR method uses linear normalization, and the TOPSIS method uses vector normalization. The difference between these two methods is described in Section 5.1. We find the compromise solution of alternative-fuel buses selection by them, and the results are shown in Section 5.2.

5.1. Comparison of TOPSIS and VIKOR

Multiple criteria analysis (MCA) is appropriate to solve the problems relating to several aspects. TOPSIS and VIKOR are two methods that are easy to apply among the ranking methods of MCA. However, these two methods are different in basic definitions. Opricovic and Tzeng (2003, 2004) have discussed the differences of these two methods. In this current research, we applied these two methods to find the compromise solution of the alternative-fuel buses selection, and have shown the difference of these methods. The main features of VIKOR and TOPSIS are summarized here in order to clarify the differences between these two methods.

5.1.1. Procedural basis

Both methods assume that there exists a performance matrix $\left[ f \right]_{nx2}$ obtained by the evaluation of all the alternatives in terms of each criterion. Normalization is used to eliminate the units of criterion values. An aggregating function is formulated and it is used as a ranking index. In addition to ranking, the VIKOR method proposes a compromise solution with an advantage rate.

5.1.2. Normalization

The difference appears in the normalization used within these two methods. The VIKOR method uses linear normalization (Opricovic and Tzeng, 2003, 2004), and the normalized value does not depend on the evaluation unit of a criterion. The TOPSIS method uses vector normalization, and the normalized value can be different for different evaluation units of a particular criterion. A later version of the TOPSIS method uses linear normalization (Opricovic and Tzeng, 2003, 2004).

5.1.3. Aggregation

The main difference appears in the aggregation approaches. The VIKOR method introduces an aggregating function, representing the distance from the ideal solution. This ranking index is an aggregation of all criteria, the relative importance of the criteria, and a balance between total and individual satisfaction. The TOPSIS method introduces the ranking index (A.6), including the distances from the ideal point and from the negative-ideal point. These distances in TOPSIS are simply summed in (A.6), without considering their relative importance. However, the reference point could be a major concern in decision making, and to be as close as possible to the ideal is the rationale of human choice. Being far away from a nadir point could be a goal only in a particular situation, and the relative importance remains an open question (see Appendix B). The TOPSIS method uses $n$-dimensional Euclidean distance that by itself could represent some balance between total and individual satisfaction, but uses it in a different way than VIKOR, where weight $v$ is introduced in (A.3).

5.1.4. Solution

Both methods provide a ranking list. The highest ranked alternative by VIKOR is the closest to the ideal solution. However, the highest ranked alternative by TOPSIS is the best in terms of the ranking index, which does not mean that it is always the closest to the ideal solution. In addition to ranking, the VIKOR method proposes a compromise solution with an advantage rate.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Energy supply</th>
<th>Energy efficiency</th>
<th>Air pollution</th>
<th>Noise pollution</th>
<th>Industrial relations</th>
<th>Employment cost</th>
<th>Maintenance cost</th>
<th>Capability vehicle</th>
<th>Road facility</th>
<th>Speed of traffic</th>
<th>Sense of comfort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Diesel bus</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CNG bus</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. LPG bus</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hydrogen</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Methanol</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Charging</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Electric dir.</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Electric bat</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Hybrid-gas.</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hyb.-diesel</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hyb.-CNG</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hyb.-LPG</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2. Compromise solution

The compromise ranking method was applied with data given by the expert group (average evaluation values in Table 2, and average weights in Table 1). The obtained ranking list (by VIKOR) is presented in Table 3.

The ranking results are obtained by applying another method, named TOPSIS, which is also a modification of compromise programming. The Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS) was developed based on the concept that the chosen alternative should have the shortest distance from the ideal solution and the farthest from the negative-ideal solution, using Euclidean distance (Hwang and Yoon, 1981). The ranking results (by TOPSIS) are presented in Table 3.

There are four compromise solutions obtained by VIKOR, because the top four are “close”. This result shows that the hybrid electric bus is the most suitable substitute bus, followed by the electric vehicles on the ranking list (Table 3).

Preference stability analysis was performed (by VIKOR) and the weight stability intervals for a single criterion are obtained, as follows.

0.021 ≤ w_1 ≤ 0.213 (input w_1 = 0.031); 0.000 ≤ w_2 ≤ 0.096 (input w_2 = 0.094);
0.116 ≤ w_3 ≤ 0.168 (input w_3 = 0.166); 0.000 ≤ w_4 ≤ 0.063 (input w_4 = 0.055);
0.000 ≤ w_5 ≤ 0.175 (input w_5 = 0.063); 0.000 ≤ w_6 ≤ 0.099 (input w_6 = 0.083);
0.000 ≤ w_7 ≤ 0.040 (input w_7 = 0.028); 0.123 ≤ w_8 ≤ 0.298 (input w_8 = 0.124);
0.073 ≤ w_9 ≤ 0.358 (input w_9 = 0.081); 0.105 ≤ w_10 ≤ 0.202 (input w_10 = 0.199);
0.000 ≤ w_11 ≤ 0.188 (input w_11 = 0.076).

The weights’ stability intervals show that the obtained compromise solution (by VIKOR, Table 3) is very sensitive to the changes in criteria weights.

With different weights from Table 1, the following sets of compromise solutions (by VIKOR) are obtained:

- Electric vehicles (three modes) are in the set of compromise solutions with the weights given by “Bus operator”, and by “Academic Institute”;
- Hybrid electric vehicles, with gasoline and diesel engine, are the compromise solution obtained with the weights given by “Manufacture”;
- Hybrid electric vehicle with gasoline engine, fuel mode CNG and LPG, and hybrid electric vehicle with diesel engine are in the set of compromise solutions obtained with the weights given by “Research Organization”.

The ranking results obtained by the TOPSIS method indicate that the electric vehicles may be considered as the best compromise solution, and the hybrid electric vehicles may be considered as the second best compromise solution.

5.3. Discussion

According to the results from Table 3, the conventional diesel engine is ranked very low, reflecting the need for an alternative-fuel mode. We can conclude that the hybrid electric bus is the most suitable substitute bus for the Taiwan urban areas in short and median term. But, if the cruising distance of the electric bus can be extended to an acceptable range, the pure electric bus could be the best alternative.

It seems that the experts have unanimously agreed that it is necessary to develop an alternative-fuel mode for public transportation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Multi-criteria ranking results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ranking by VIKOR</td>
<td>Ranking by TOPSIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hybrid electric bus—gasoline engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Electric bus—exchangeable battery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Electric bus—opportunity charging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Electric bus—direct charging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hybrid electric bus—diesel engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Liquid propane gas (LPG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Compress natural gas (CNG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hybrid electric bus with CNG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hybrid electric bus with LPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conventional diesel engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Methanol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fuel cell (hydrogen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In comparison with conventional vehicles, alternative-fuel vehicles would contribute significantly to the improvement of air quality in urban areas. However, the electric vehicle demands recharging, and it remains uncompetitive with the fuel-engine vehicle because of its frequent recharging needs. Because the bus system owns such features as permanent terminal, route, group of user, time of operation, and frequency, it is likely to expect that the implementation of an alternative-fuel bus might become a very important option for the development of public transportation.

Since the technology of electric vehicles remains to be matured, a hybrid electric bus would be employed as the transitional mode of transportation for the improvement of environmental quality. These vehicles will be replaced when the technological characteristics of electric vehicles, or other new technology, will be improved. In terms of a short-term implementation strategy, the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) should devote funding from air pollution taxes to city government to conduct the development of an electric bus. For medium term, the city government should stimulate purchase of the electric vehicles by every bus company and replace old buses. For long-term consideration, it is necessary to establish the appropriate industrial policy to facilitate the development of the relevant domestic industry.

On discussion with experts on the electric bus held in the graduate institute of the Bureau of Transportation of Taipei City, the government revealed a desire to rent natural gas vehicles to operate in Taipei City, thus contributing to the improvement of air quality. It was proposed that relevant data—such as energy consumption cost of operation, cost of maintenance, and environmental impact—should be recorded when these vehicles operate in Taiwan. The collected data will be used for future study of the alternative-fuel vehicle in Taiwan.

It is widely acknowledged that the automobile industry is a locomotive industry, as it can help upgrade many of its relevant industries; therefore, if relevant industries in the country can be upgraded because of the development of electric vehicle, it would be beneficial for the domestic industry. At present, there are already many institutions, i.e., the Asia Pacific Investment Company, Min Kun Company, Fang Fu Company Limited, and New Journey Company, working on relevant technological developments for electric vehicles, and they have obtained patents covering all areas throughout the world.

The definition of electric vehicle does not include hybrid electric vehicle, and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications did not specify the electric vehicle and alternative-fuel vehicle of low pollution; thus, confusion might come up in regard to subsidy and reward when hybrid electric vehicle starts to operate in Taiwan. It is then suggested that the Ministry of Transportation and Communications of Taiwan has to clarify the positioning of the hybrid electric vehicle.

6. Conclusions

The result of multi-criteria optimization is that the hybrid electric bus is more suitable at present for public transportation in order to improve the environmental quality. These vehicles will be replaced when the technological characteristics of electric vehicles, or other new technology, will be improved.

The multi-criteria optimization of the alternative-fuel mode is performed with data given by the experts from the relevant engineering fields. The assessment method is based on gathering data and evaluating alternatives by the experts without using mathematical model of evaluating criteria, and this approach could be considered as a contribution of this paper.

The results of multi-criteria analysis indicate what to do first in developing the alternative-fuel mode, in order to improve the environmental quality. To answer the questions of how and when to implement the alternative-fuel mode improvement, the research should continue by solving the development problems under budgetary constraints.

By the compromise ranking method, the compromise solution which could be accepted by the decision makers is determined because it provides a maximum “group utility” of the “majority”, and a minimum of the individual regret of the “opponent”.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A. VIKOR

The compromise ranking method (known as VIKOR) is introduced as one applicable technique to implement within the MCDM. Assuming that each alternative is evaluated according to each criterion function, the compromise ranking is performed by comparing the measure of closeness to the ideal alternative (Opricovic, 1998; Opricovic and Tzeng, 2002, 2003, 2004; Tzeng et al., 2002). The multi-criteria merit for compromise ranking is developed from the $L_p$ metric used in the compromise programming method (Zeleny, 1982). The
various alternatives will be denoted as \( a_1, a_2, ..., a_J \). For an alternative \( a_i \), the merit of the \( i \)th aspect is denoted by \( f_{ij} \), i.e. \( f_{ij} \) is the value of \( i \)th criterion function for the alternative \( a_i \); \( n \) is the number of criteria.

The compromise-ranking algorithm has the following steps:

(1) Determination of the best \( f_i^* \) and the worst \( f_i^- \) values of all criterion functions. Assuming that \( i \)th function represents a benefit:

\[
f_i^* = \max f_{ij}; \quad f_i^- = \min f_{ij}.
\]

(2) Compute the values \( S_j \) and \( R_j \), \( j = 1, ..., J \), by the relations

\[
S_j = \sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i (f_{ij}^* - f_{ij})/(f_{ij}^* - f_{ij}^-),
\]

\[
R_j = \max \{w_i (f_{ij}^* - f_{ij})/(f_{ij}^* - f_{ij}^-) | i = 1, 2, ..., n\},
\]

where \( w_i \) are the weights of the criteria.

(3) Compute the values \( Q_j \), \( j = 1, ..., J \), by the relation

\[
Q_j = v(S_j - S^*)/(S^* - S^-) + (1 - v)(R_j - R^*)/(R^- - R^*),
\]

where:

\[
S^* = \min S_j, \quad S^- = \max S_j,
\]

\[
R^* = \min R_j, \quad R^- = \max R_j,
\]

\( v \) is introduced as the weight of the strategy of “the majority of criteria” (or “the maximum group utility”), usually \( v = 0.5 \).

(4) Rank the alternatives, sorting by the values \( S, R \) and \( Q \). The results are three ranking lists.

(5) Propose as a compromise solution, for given criteria weights, the alternative \( a' \), which is the best ranked by the measure \( Q \) if the following two conditions are satisfied:

C1. “Acceptable advantage” \( Q(a') - Q(a') \geq DQ \),

where \( a' \) is the alternative with second position in the ranking list by \( Q \); \( DQ = 1/(J - 1) \); \( J \) is the number of alternatives (\( DQ = 0.25 \) if \( J \leq 4 \)).

C2. “Acceptable stability in decision making”: The alternative \( a' \) has to also be the best ranked by \( S \) or by \( R \), or both, as well. This compromise solution is stable within the decision-making process, which could be: “voting by majority rule” (when \( v > 0.5 \) is needed), or “by consensus” \( v \approx 0.5 \), or “with veto” \( (v < 0.5) \). \( v \) is the weight of the decision-making strategy “the majority of criteria” (or “the maximum group utility”).

If one of the conditions is not satisfied, then the set of compromise solutions is proposed, which consists of:

- Alternatives \( a' \) and \( a'' \) if only the conditions C2 are not satisfied.
- Alternatives \( a', a'', ..., a^{(k)} \) if the conditions C1 are not satisfied; \( a^{(k)} \) is determined by the relation \( Q(a^{(k)}) - Q(a') > DQ \), the positions of these alternatives are “in closeness”.

By the compromise-ranking method, the compromise solution is determined, which could be accepted by the decision makers because it provides a maximum “group utility” of the “majority” (with measure \( S \), representing “concordance”), and a minimum of the individual regret of the “opponent” (with measure \( R \), representing “discordance”). The VIKOR algorithm determines the weight stability intervals for the obtained compromise solution with the “input” weights, given by the experts (Opricovic, 1998).

Appendix B. TOPSIS

The Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to an Ideal Solution (TOPSIS) method is presented in Chen and Hwang (1992), with reference to Hwang and Yoon (1981). The basic principle is that the chosen alternative should have the shortest distance from the ideal solution and the farthest distance from the negative-ideal solution.

The TOPSIS procedure consists of the following steps:

(1) Calculate the normalized decision matrix. The normalized value \( r_{ij} \) is calculated as

\[
r_{ij} = f_{ij}/\sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{J} f_{ij}^2}, \quad j = 1, ..., J; \quad i = 1, ..., n.
\]

(2) Calculate the weighted normalized decision matrix. The weighted normalized value \( v_{ij} \) is calculated as

\[
v_{ij} = w_i r_{ij}, \quad j = 1, ..., J; \quad i = 1, ..., n,
\]

where \( w_i \) is the weight of the \( i \)th attribute or criterion and \( \sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i = 1 \).

(3) Determine the ideal and negative-ideal solution.

\[
A^* = \{v_1^*, ..., v_n^*\} = \{\max v_i | i \in I'\}, \quad (\min v_i | i \in I'\},
\]

\[
A^- = \{v_1^-, ..., v_n^-\} = \{\min v_i | i \in I'\}, \quad (\max v_i | i \in I'\},
\]

where \( I' \) is associated with benefit criteria and \( I'' \) is associated with cost criteria.
(4) Calculate the separation measures using the \( n \) -dimensional Euclidean distance. The separation of each alternative from the ideal solution is given as

\[ D_j^* = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (v_{ij} - v_{ij}^*)^2}, \quad j = 1, \ldots, J. \]  

(B.1)

Similarly, the separation from the negative-ideal solution is given as

\[ D_j^0 = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (v_{ij} - v_{ij}^0)^2}, \quad j = 1, \ldots, J. \]  

(B.2)

(5) Calculate the relative closeness to the ideal solution. The relative closeness of the alternative \( a_j \) with respect to \( A^* \) is defined as

\[ C_j^* = D_j^*/(D_j^* + D_j^0), \quad j = 1, \ldots, J. \]  

(B.3)

Rank the preference order.

**Appendix C. Practical data given to the experts**

The data given to the experts are summarized in Tables 4–8.

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### Table 4
Comparison of the functions of diesel and alternative-fuel bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Diesel bus</th>
<th>EVs</th>
<th>HEVs</th>
<th>Methanol/ethanol bus</th>
<th>Natural gas bus</th>
<th>Fuel-cell bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route</td>
<td>NSR*</td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>Flat</td>
<td>NSR*</td>
<td>NSR*</td>
<td>Flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depot</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Large (REP)</td>
<td>Large (REP)</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Large (REP)</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>60–80 (S, M, L)</td>
<td>20–60 (S, M, L)</td>
<td>20–60 (S, M, L)</td>
<td>60–80 (L)</td>
<td>60–80 (L)</td>
<td>60–80 (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. Speed (km/h)</td>
<td>100–120</td>
<td>45–80</td>
<td>60–80</td>
<td>100–120</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70–80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruising dist. (km)</td>
<td>400–500</td>
<td>60–220</td>
<td>200–400</td>
<td>200–250</td>
<td>200–300</td>
<td>300–350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradeability</td>
<td>&lt;18</td>
<td>&lt;16</td>
<td>&lt;16</td>
<td>&lt;18</td>
<td>&lt;18</td>
<td>&lt;16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recharge time</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Slow: 8–10 h; fast: 30 min</td>
<td>Slow: 8–10 h; fast: 30 min</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Slow: 6–8 h; fast: 10 min methanol system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute of Transportation (2000).

*NSR = No special restriction.
*REP = Recharge equipment provided.

### Table 5
Energy efficiency of diesel and alternative-fuel bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bus</th>
<th>Energy efficiency</th>
<th>Fuel-heating value*</th>
<th>Comp. of energy efficiency*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diesel bus</td>
<td>1.5 km/l (1.5–1.6)</td>
<td>8800 kcal/l</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure electric bus</td>
<td>1.6 km/kWh (1.6–2.4)</td>
<td>860 kcal/kWh</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid electric bus</td>
<td>2.31 km/l</td>
<td>8800 kcal/l</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNG bus</td>
<td>1.27 km/m³ (1.27–1.45)</td>
<td>8900 kcal/m³</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methanol bus</td>
<td>0.6 km/l (0.6–0.7)</td>
<td>4200 kcal/l</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel-cell bus</td>
<td>2.79 km/l (Diesel equivalent)</td>
<td>8800 kcal/l</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute of Transportation (2000).

*The energy efficiency of hybrid electric bus and fuel-cell bus are represented by the diesel equivalent, so their heating values are represented by the heating value of diesel.

*Comparison of energy efficiency = (Alternative-fuel bus energy efficiency/fuel heating value)/(Diesel bus energy efficiency/diesel heating value).

### Table 6
Exhaust emission characteristics of alternative-fuel bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bus</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>NOx</th>
<th>HC</th>
<th>CO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pure electric</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid electric</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural gas</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methanol</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethanol</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>24.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel-cell</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>6.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>10.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute of Transportation (2000).

### Table 7
The emission characteristics of carbon dioxide of alternative-fuel buses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bus type</th>
<th>CO₂ (kg/km)</th>
<th>AFV/DIESEL</th>
<th>(DIESEL-AFV)/DIESEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diesel bus</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure electric bus</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid electric bus</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural gas bus</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methanol bus</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>—6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel-cell bus</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute of Transportation (2000).

The major pollutions of pure electric buses are generated from plants.
Table 8
Cost of diesel and alternative-fuel buses (unit: 1000 NT$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost items</th>
<th>Diesel bus</th>
<th>Pure electric</th>
<th>Hybrid electric</th>
<th>Natural gas</th>
<th>Methanol bus</th>
<th>Fuel-cell bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attainment cost</td>
<td>Purchase cost</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>360,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recharge equipment cost</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>340,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>420,000</td>
<td>144,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation cost</td>
<td>Fuel cost</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>5880</td>
<td>9450</td>
<td>12,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>3875</td>
<td>7880</td>
<td>11,450</td>
<td>14,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance cost</td>
<td>Vehicle maintenance cost</td>
<td>11,400</td>
<td>18,495</td>
<td>22,200</td>
<td>7440</td>
<td>9840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recharge equipment cost</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td>11,400</td>
<td>18,495</td>
<td>22,200</td>
<td>10,410</td>
<td>14,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifecycle cost</td>
<td></td>
<td>298,901</td>
<td>521,950</td>
<td>643,328</td>
<td>598,011</td>
<td>373,127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute of Transportation (2000).

Management cost is assumed to be 2000 thousands/year.

References


Opricovic, S., 1998. Multicriteria optimization of civil engineering systems. Faculty of Civil Engineering, Belgrade.


