Exploring Alternatives and Pathways to Clean Air Zones in Asian cities

Request for Proposals
July 2025

The Clean Air Fund is seeking specialist expertise on the design and implementation of Clean Air Zones in Asian cities. The consultant/firm/consortium will have demonstrable experience working on urban transport measures in Asia, as well as conducting in-depth, primary and secondary research, and have strong experience of developing learning products. Ideally, the consultant/firm/consortium has strong technical understanding of the relation between air quality and climate and health impact.

Background to Clean Air Fund

Launched in 2019, the Clean Air Fund is a philanthropic initiative with a mission to tackle air pollution around the world. Our aim is to help build and support a powerful global movement for clean air. We achieve this by bringing together funders, researchers, policy makers and campaigners working on a wide range of issues to find and scale solutions that will provide clean air for all. More information about the Clean Air Fund can be found on our website: www.cleanairfund.org.

Context to the assignment

In February 2025, the Clean Air Fund launched its Clean Air Zone guidance, designed to aide policy makers navigate the process of developing and delivering a CAZ. Not all cities that are interested in a CAZ have the necessary legal frameworks, budgets, political appetite, or infrastructure in place. Where this is the case, CAZs may not be the most obvious policy choice for reducing transport emissions and/or may need adjustments to fit the local context.

There is currently limited evidence on what the optimum balance of policy measures looks like in these instances and how to sequence them, especially in situations where resources are scarce. The Clean Air Fund is looking to generate practical evidence of good practice of as well as intermediate steps towards achieving effective clean air zones in Asian cities.

Background to the issue

The transport sector accounts for approximately 21% of global CO_2 emissions, with road transport responsible for about 75% of that—translating to roughly 15% of total global CO_2 emissions. In Asia, road transport contributes 89% of transport emissions.

In response, many cities are considering measures to tackle air pollution from vehicles. Clean Air Zones (CAZs) —policies that restrict or disincentivise polluting vehicles in specific urban areas – is one of these. Projections

indicate more than 500 CAZs to be active in 2025, with the majority of these located in Europe. In Asia, the picture is much more scattered. Figures are not comprehensively tracked but estimates of active, piloted, and planned CAZs amount to 30-40. This includes multiple zero emission or green logistics zones in Seoul and Shenzhen as well as pilot initiatives in India such as, Bangalore's Church Street experiment, Delhi's Chandni Chowk, and EV-only zones in places like Chandni Chowk and Kevadi.

Evidence across Asia shows challenges in pursuing CAZs. For those cities that have identified CAZs to be a priority, there is a need for more flexible, context-sensitive approaches that address the dual challenge of reducing vehicle emissions and maintaining economic and social equity. This includes intermediate measures towards full CAZs.

Problem Statement

While Clean Air Zones have shown some promise in Asian cities — particularly where they are:

- Paired with equitable public transport investments
- Focused on high-pollution hotspots
- Supported by air quality monitoring and public awareness
- Piloted with stakeholder engagement

… they have also faced serious limitations:

- Dominance of informal transport (minibuses, motorcycles) often excluded or non-compliant
- Lack of affordable clean vehicle alternatives as well as comprehensive public transport options
- Limited municipal enforcement capabilities
- Risk of social backlash without equity safeguards
- Insufficient traffic and pollution data for targeted action
- Lack of adequate infrastructure resulting in CAZs shifting emissions to other parts of cities

Given these constraints, the pressing question is:

What is the optimum balance of policy measures that cities in Asia need to take to effectively reduce transport emissions—especially where a Clean Air Zone needs significant additional measures to be effective and/or if a city is not ready for a Clean Air Zone?

Purpose of the Assignment

This assignment seeks to provide strategic, actionable guidance for cities in Asia that are considering or are in the early phase of Clean Air Zones but are constrained by structural, socio-economic, or political limitations.

Audience

The assignment is designed to support city decision-makers in Asian cities who are interested in initiating or strengthening Clean Air Zones.

Objectives

The consultant or research team will be expected to:

1. **Document effective enforcement practices**
   Gather examples of successful urban enforcement measures across Asian cities—whether or not they are tied to CAZs—including those that demonstrate scalable, low-cost approaches to vehicle regulation. Provide an analysis of how to apply these to CAZs.
2. **Develop recommendations for transitional actions**
   Identify the most impactful intermediate measures that cities without the immediate capacity to implement CAZs can adopt to reduce transport-related emissions.
3. **Identify replicable transport equity policies**
   Highlight initiatives that prioritise inclusion, affordability, and protection for vulnerable populations in transport policy, and assess their applicability in other urban contexts. Provide recommendations on what might be most effective and feasible for Asian cities.
4. **Propose strategies to address high-emitting informal transport**
   Provide practical, context-sensitive recommendations for integrating informal transport operators (e.g., minibus taxis, motorcycle taxis) into urban clean air strategies in Asia.

Deliverables

1. Inception Report:

    - Overview of methodology and work plan
    - List of cities and stakeholders to be consulted
    - Preliminary outline of outputs
2. Case Study Compendium:
    - 8-10 case examples from cities in Asia, showcasing:
        - Evidence of impact including air quality benefits for health and climate
        - Transitional steps for addressing vehicle emissions
        - Enforcement mechanisms
        - Equity-focused transport support measures
        - Informal transport engagement strategies & its links with public transport
3. Policy Recommendations Report:
    - Structured set of options and recommendations for Asian cities not ready for CAZs
    - Feasibility analysis of transitional steps (cost, time, impact, equity considerations)

We are expecting interim findings to be ready for a session with city policy-makers in the Clean Air Week (24-28 November)

Methodology

The assignment will use a mixed-methods approach, including:

- Desk research and literature review
- Up to 25 semi-structured interviews with city officials, planners, transport unions, and civil society actors
- Comparative analysis of city-level experiences

Duration and Timeline

The assignment is expected to take place over **12-16 weeks**, tentatively structured as follows:

Phase	Duration
Inception & Planning	2 weeks
Data Collection	4 weeks
Analysis & Drafting	4 weeks
Finalization & Delivery	2 weeks

We would be expecting to use interim findings of data analysis to feed into a Clean Air Week event **(24-28 November 2025)**, with the final report completed by **31 December 2025**.

Expertise Required

The assignment team should demonstrate experience in:

- Urban transport planning in the Global South
- Air quality or climate policy
- Informal transport systems
- Urban equity and social inclusion
- Policy development and stakeholder engagement

Submissions from Global South consultants will be encouraged.

10. Budget

$60k

Timeline, budget, and submission

The deadline for submission of proposals is end of day 6 August 2025 . Proposals must be submitted via email to Sietske van der Ploeg at: svanderploeg@cleanairfund.org

Activity	Date
Deadline for Proposals	6 August 2025
Interview with shortlisted bidders	8 August 2025
Proposal finalisation and agreement	22 August 2025
Contracting and Project start	1 September 2025
Deadline for completing the work	31 December 2025