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Decarbonizing the Global Shipping Industry – Is Hydrogen Fuel the Answer?

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Decarbonization is coming to the global shipping industry. Accounting for nearly one quarter of all carbon emissions from the world's transportation sector and one billion tons of carbon dioxide annually, shipping stands at a critical juncture in its efforts to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate its environmental impact.

Among the emerging alternatives to traditional fossil fuels, hydrogen is one of the most promising candidates due to its potential for zero carbon emissions, the relative ease of retrofitting existing ships with hydrogen fuel cells and the high energy intensity needed to propel enormous ocean-going vessels. This article explores the prospects of hydrogen fuel as a replacement for fossil fuels in maritime transport in the context of some of the emerging and overlapping technology, regulatory and public policy issues.

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