

MEDIA RELEASE



NATIONAL COALITION LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO URGE AUTOMAKERS TO PRODUCE PLUG-IN HYBRID VEHICLES

WASHINGTON, D.C.—January 24, 2006—Declaring the country’s economy, environmental health and national security at risk, a grassroots coalition of cities including Austin, Baltimore, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle as well as electric utilities and national policy organizations today kicked off a nationwide campaign to urge automakers to accelerate development of plug-in hybrid vehicles.

Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) would combine today’s new gas-electric hybrid technology with larger batteries that could provide an all-electric operating range of 25 to 35 miles or more. The result is an 80+ mile-per-gallon vehicle — with even greater fuel economy possible utilizing bio-fuels.

Plug-ins could be recharged by plugging into a standard wall socket, delivering “electric” gallons of gas for about 75 cents a gallon at prevailing electric rates. Such a vehicle could reduce gasoline consumption for the average American by 50 percent to 70 percent and reduce automobile emissions well in excess of emissions that might result from the additional use of power plants.

“Plug-in hybrids represent a real near-term solution to America’s over-reliance on foreign oil imports and energy prices that escalate the cost of everything and threaten the very economic life of our nation,” says Austin Mayor Will Wynn, who pledged \$1 million in city rebates to help citizens and businesses purchase the first wave of plug-ins to roll off assembly lines. “The technology exists today,” Wynn says. “This campaign will demonstrate to automakers that the market is also there.”

Already almost a dozen cities, over 100 public power utilities, businesses and a host of national policy groups have signed on to the “Plug-In Partners” campaign. Austin’s template calls for cities to initiate citizen petition drives and to encourage government and businesses to issue “soft” orders or expressions of interest in purchasing plug-ins. In Austin, 11,000 citizens have signed petitions calling on automakers to produce plug-ins, and soft orders for 600 plug-in vehicles have been received from government and businesses. For example, an area pest control company has pledged to buy up to 150 light weight plug-in trucks, once they are produced.

“Nothing has to be invented to produce a plug-in hybrid vehicle,” says Dr. Andrew Frank, a mechanical engineering professor at the University of California at Davis and Director of the UCD Hybrid Electric Research Center. “Everything needed is available: the power trains, the gasoline engines, the computer systems, electric motors and batteries. All we need is for one of the large auto manufacturers to step up to the plate.”

An additional component of the nationwide Plug-In Partners campaign is for electric utilities to help build a pool of funding in their respective communities to provide rebates to citizens and businesses buying the first round of plug-ins. Experts estimate there is sufficient generation in place and available at night to charge up to one-third of all vehicles in America, if they were plug-ins. They point to plug-ins as a critical part of the answer to a looming crisis.

“Oil imports and the dark cloud they cast over this country requires dramatic and immediate attention,” says Frank Gaffney, President, Center for National Security Policy. “When that prolonged oil crisis occurs, Americans will pay anything because they will have no choice. Why wait until a catastrophe strikes to get truly serious about addressing the problem?”

Last year, U.S. consumers purchased more than 200,000 hybrid vehicles, which have grown from two models in 2000 to 11 models today. Hybrid sales are projected to triple over the next six years, as more Americans demonstrate their desire for better fuel economy and lower emissions. According to the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), half the cars in the U.S. are driven just 25 miles a day or less. “A plug-in vehicle with even a 20-mile range could reduce petroleum fuel consumption by about 60 percent,” says Bob Graham, Manager of EPRI’s Electric Transmission program.

EPRI has teamed with DaimlerChrysler AG of Stuttgart, Germany, to design and build a plug-in prototype van that will be tested in a small number of American cities over the next year. The vans, which have a 20-mile all-electric range, will be outfitted with either nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) batteries or lithium ion (Li-Ion) batteries.

The cost, reliability and weight of batteries are often cited by automotive industry experts as one of the stumbling blocks to the mass production of plug-ins.

“We have driven our fleet of over 200 electric vehicles almost 12 million miles and have had no major problems with the batteries,” notes Edward Kjaer, Manager of Southern California Edison’s Electric Transportation Department. “The new generation of lithium-ion batteries is more powerful and lighter-weight and with reasonable volumes, should provide a price that would allow plug-in hybrid electric vehicles to be competitive.”

A number of leading energy efficiency and environmental organizations also support plug-in vehicles as important to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that lead to global warming. Plug-in Partner Coalition members include: Alliance to Save Energy, Environmental and Energy Study Institute, Clean Air Coalition, California Cars Initiative, and The Institute for Environmental Research and Education.

“Even drawing from our existing power plants, plug-in vehicles have the potential to cut a vehicle’s petroleum consumption by three-fourths or more, can operate at as little as one-fourth the fuel cost, and reduce greenhouse gases by two-thirds,” said Kateri Callahan, President of the Alliance to Save Energy. “As we increasingly turn to alternative technologies to improve the fuel economy of our vehicles, we will see increasing benefits to our economy, our environment, and our national security.”

News and information regarding the nationwide Plug-In Partners campaign will be chronicled at www.pluginpartners.org which will include summary reports on the results of petition drives, “soft orders” and development of community incentives programs. The coalition also will issue quarterly campaign reports over the coming year to the media, elected officials and auto manufacturers.

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