

NATURAL GAS VEHICLE WORKSHOP

by
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The Compelling Case for Natural Gas Vehicles workshop was held on January 22 at the Shreveport Convention Center. The workshop was co-hosted by the Clean Vehicle Education Foundation, several area Clean Cities Coalitions, the cities of Shreveport and Bossier City, and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. Stephe Yborra with the Clean Vehicle Education Foundation was the workshop moderator. There were approximately 200 people in attendance.

DNR Office of Conservation Commissioner Jim Welsh welcomed attendees with remarks about the history of natural gas in Louisiana, the importance of Louisiana's natural gas industry to the country, including the Haynesville shale play, and Louisiana's commitment to the efficient and environmentally sound use of this valuable natural resource.

As the title of the workshop suggests, the purpose was to show that natural gas vehicles (NGVs) are a viable option for many fleets. Mr. Yborra emphasized that NGVs are not suited for every fleet, but generally feasible only for fleets that have high fuel usage and are centrally refueled. He also mentioned that personal, light-duty NGVs are currently not practical in most situations due to limited vehicle availability, the high cost of converting a vehicle, and the lack of sufficient refueling infrastructure. With these caveats out of the way, Mr. Yborra and the other presenters went on to speak about all aspects of NGVs. The following is a summary of the benefits of NGVs that were presented during the workshop.

Economic benefits of NGVs. It is less expensive to fuel with natural gas than with gasoline or diesel, but currently, the price advantage of natural gas is small due to the dramatic fall in gasoline and diesel prices over the past six months. It is widely believed that gasoline and diesel prices will not stay at their current low levels, but rise significantly, thus restoring a bigger price advantage for natural gas. Maintenance costs of NGVs are also reduced over those of gasoline and diesel vehicles due to the clean-burning nature of natural gas.

Environmental benefits of NGVs. EPA emission requirements for heavy-duty vehicles are becoming increasingly stringent. NGVs can achieve these requirements with less cost and complexity than diesel fueled heavy-duty vehicles. NGVs also produce 20 - 30% less green house gas emissions over gasoline and diesel fueled vehicles, depending on vehicle and usage.

Energy security benefits of NGVs. Most of the natural gas consumed in the U.S. is produced domestically. Using it to displace gasoline or diesel produced from foreign crude oil enhances U.S. energy security.

Louisiana Public Service Commissioner Foster Campbell spoke during lunch about the positive economic impact the exploration and development of the Haynesville shale has had on the area, and Louisiana's opportunities to diversify its energy production/consumption mix utilizing offshore wind and solar energy.

CleanSkies.tv reported on the workshop. Their coverage can be viewed at <http://www.CleanSkies.tv>. Click on the Interactive Program Guide, then on the Feb. 26 tab. The workshop agenda and presentations can be accessed at: <http://www.cleanvehicle.org/workshop/Shreveport.shtml>.