



The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report
 April 15, 2014

This report is a summary of articles appearing in popular, business, and technical media referring to the impact of fuel costs and fuel efficiency on vehicle technology, development, and markets. At the end of the report is a list of all articles summarized, with hyperlinks to internet sources where available. Some hyperlinks may require free registration or paid subscriptions to access. *The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report* (ISSN: 1946-1011) is compiled by Thomas L. R. Smith, Ph. D., Economic Analysis Branch of the Budget and Financial Analysis Division, Washington State Department of Transportation. Contact the editor at smithtm@wsdot.wa.gov or (360) 705-7941. Contributions of articles and positive comments about *The Report* are welcome.

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National Hybrid, Plug-in, and All-Electric Sales Data for March 2014: March hybrid and all-electric sales increased at a higher rate than the auto market, while plug-in hybrids performed just a little below the market, *Hybrid Cars* (Cobb, April 2, 2014) says. Hybrids were up 43.4% over the previous month; however they were down 5.5% for the same period last year. Overall, hybrids account for 2.86% of the auto market. Hybrids were off, *Hybrid Cars* speculates, because sales for the segment leader, Prius, were soft. Part of this softness is because Toyota will introduce a new improved Prius soon. Battery electric cars were up over the previous month and year. Nissan Leaf led with over half the battery market at 54.8%, while the Tesla came in second at 28.4%. Tesla sales are down because the company is shifting assets to Europe. Chevy Volt led the plug-in hybrid market with 1,478 vehicles (32.2%), with the Prius Plug-in trailing by 26 cars. The plug-in and battery market accounted for 0.3% of the total auto market each or 0.6% together.

HYBRIDS

The State of Massachusetts is offering \$2,500 rebates for buyers of plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles, *The Brookline TAB* (Norton, March 31, 2014) advanced. Additionally, the State putting up money for towns and cities to buy plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles and to install charging stations. Massachusetts is also funding electric buses for transit systems.

A study published in the science journal *Applied Energy* (Saxena, Phadke, & Gopal, January 2014) says that hybrid and electric vehicles will be more effective in reducing greenhouse gas and lowering fuel usage in China than in the United States. The issue is that Chinese driving habits and styles produce more greenhouse gas. Chinese drivers drive at lower speeds, start and stop frequently, and are prone to quick acceleration and deceleration. These driving conditions return the greatest benefit with hybrid vehicles. Compared to U. S. driving practices of higher speeds with smother acceleration, US hybrids get 13.2% fuel savings for parallel hybrids to 32.6% for power-split hybrids, while hybrids in China would achieve 25.5 to 53.6% fuel savings, respectively.

Five states have joined to purchase 32 diesel-electric passenger rail locomotives from Siemens *UPI* (Sevcik, April 7, 2014) and *Think Progress* (Strasser, April 7, 2014) report. Washington is among the group which also includes of Illinois, California, Michigan, and

Missouri. Siemens will build the locomotives, which cost \$225 million for the lot, in Sacramento. Cummins will build the engines in Columbus, Indiana. The various States will take delivery in 2016. The Charger locomotives, as they are called, meet the latest EPA diesel emission standards for trains. They are also faster and meet higher safety standards. Joseph D. Tario of NYSERDA provided these articles.

There are 13 States around the country that allow hybrid, electric, and alternative fuel vehicles in High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) or High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. Washington State is not one of them. The combination of vehicles authorized, under what conditions, and how these vehicles impact HOV and HOT lanes are fairly confusing. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has come to the rescue with its publication, *Impact of Exempt Vehicles on Managed Lanes* (Turnbull, January 15, 2014). At only 32 pages, it is an easy,¹ but informative read. The publication provides a State by State guide to the vehicles authorized in HOV and HOT lanes. It becomes quickly evident that vehicles allowed in one State don't pass muster in another. This can be a problem when alternative vehicle owners commute to other States. It can also be an issue within a State. In some cases, vehicles authorized in lanes on one road in a State are not authorized in lanes on a different road in another part of the State. The document provides several tables that help the reader make sense of the patchwork quilt of Nation-wide HOV regulations. There is an entire section devoted to each State's regulations. Finally, there is a discussion on problems associated with allowing hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles into these lanes. Problems and considerations include defeating the purpose of these lanes by cause increased congestion and reduced carpooling. Other issues include creating confusion among various user groups of HOV and HOT lanes. While it is our policy to withhold endorsement in this publication, we will go out on a limb here and say this should be required reading for any policy or lawmaker considering allowing alternative vehicles in HOV or HOT lanes. We found this publication on the desk of Rich Struna at WSDOT.

There will be two Volt models available in 2016, *Auto World News* (Mercurio, April 11, 2014) reported. Chevrolet will introduce a slightly cheaper version that has a smaller battery pack and has a smaller range in electric-only mode. The company hopes that sales will increase with the introduction of a \$30,000 model.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has closed the investigation into Tesla fires, *Automotive News* (Nelson, March 28, 2014) says. To close the investigation and avoid a recall, Tesla made two changes to the Model S. The first change was to raise the chassis higher from the ground to avoid more road debris. The second fix was to install a titanium shield on the bottom of the car to protect the batteries that are built into the chassis. The Tesla fires were caused when road debris punctured the battery compartment of the vehicles.

From *Hybrid Report* subscriber Richard C. Hanley of the Connecticut Department of Transportation Strategic Planning and Projects, we learn that Connecticut DOT has funds available for municipalities, State agencies, and public utilities to buy electric vehicles or other alternative fuel vehicles. To get the funds, Connecticut organizations should submit a Request for Proposal through the State's [Contracting Portal](#).

¹ The author is no P. G. Wodehouse, but then, who is?

We also learn from subscriber Richard C. Hanley (in an unofficial capacity) that the Westport, Connecticut, Electric Car Club will hold its 2nd Annual Connecticut Electric Vehicle Rally on Sunday, May 4, 2014, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm in Westport, Connecticut. You can find more information about the rally at the Club's [website](#). The club also has a Facebook page with information for you social networkers, but we are not allowed to go there.

Even though there are not a lot of them on the roads yet, the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#) (Reichmuth, March 25, 2014) says that electric vehicles are having a positive impact on reducing oil consumption and global warming emissions. The scientists say that plug-ins have avoided "the burning of 45 million gallons of gasoline." In California, plug-ins have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 140 thousand tons per year. American electric motorists have saved \$100 million per year in fuel costs.

The New Zealand Post Office is testing out a three-wheeled and four-wheeled electric scooter for antipodean² postal delivery, [The Dominion Post](#) (Kitchin, March 28, 2014) posted. New Zealand Post is not looking at these as an environmental issue, but as a response to fundamental changes in postal delivery. New Zealand has experienced a decline in letters due to internet communication and an increase in package delivery due to online shopping. As a result, fewer "posties," as New Zealand calls their letter carriers, are needed, but the remaining posties have longer routes and are required to carry more weight. While many routes in New Zealand are on foot, posties use a variety of bicycles and motor scooters to make their rounds.

Ben Franklin Transit, providing service to Benton and Franklin counties in Washington, is testing an electric bus for a month, [KEPR Television](#) (Campbell, April 1, 2014) broadcasted. The transit agency will run the bus for a month of various routes before making the decision to buy it. Ben Franklin already owns one electric bus and has a goal of having nothing but electric buses by 2020.

Tesla won the right to continue selling cars in New York state at five company-owned stores, [Automotive News](#) (March 28, 2014) reported; however, the company will not be allowed to open more stores in the Empire State. The Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association was attempting to block Tesla direct sales in New York, but agreed to grandfather the five Tesla stores in exchange for other changes to New York dealership laws.

In related Tesla news, [Automotive News](#) (Wilson, March 28, 2014) says that Governor Rick Perry suggested that Texas's franchise laws could be changed in order to encourage Tesla to open a large battery plant in the Lone Star State. The Texas Automobile Dealers Association is opposed to that idea and sent a letter to Texas Legislators telling them not to change the law. Currently, Tesla operates showrooms in Texas, but cannot sell cars at the show room. Texans must order cars online and pick up their cars out of State.

Tesla is taking the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission to court to overturn that organization's decision to revoke the license it gave Tesla to operate in 2010, [Automotive News](#) (Thurlow, April 2, 2014) reported. Under the Vehicle Commission's ruling, Tesla's two stores in New Jersey must close by April 15. Tesla will argue in court that New Jersey law that forbids

² Look that up in your Funk & Wagnall's.

manufacturers to operate stores only applies to those manufacturers who also have franchisees. The intent of the law is to protect franchisees from competition by their own manufacturers. Tesla does not have franchisees, so the law does not apply to them, Tesla claims.

The Municipality of Utrecht in the Netherlands is putting up €400,000 (\$550,840) to encourage electric vehicles, *Utrecht Central* (Darmanin, March 29, 2014) says. The city will subsidize electric scooters; but most of the money will go for charging stations.

Electric cars in the European Union must make internal combustion engine sounds by 2019, *Autocar* (Redha, April 4, 2014) rumbled. Several European electric cars come with “sound symposers” as options, but say that it will not be a problem to meet the new European Commission standard. While the plan has to be approved by the European Council and Parliament, it is pretty much a done deal.

Smith Electric Vehicles³ in Kansas City has suspended production of its commercial electric delivery trucks, the *Kansas City Star* (Everly, April 4, 2014) flickers. Production was suspended because of cash flow issues resulting from the inability to find buyers for trucks built with a Department of Energy grant. The company built 439 of 510 vehicles that were produced under the grant, but Smith Electric could not find buyers for the rest of the vehicles. One industry analyst says there are more electric truck producers “than the market can bear.” The *Kansas City Business Journal* (Alonzo, April 7, 2014) followed up with a report from the company that Smith Electric is not closing and the production will continue after changes are made to their supply chain management. No one has been laid off at the company, and Smith expects to make “hundreds, if not thousands of electric vehicles,” when they restart production. They also expect to make a profit by the end of the year.

Nine households on the same street in Marlow west of London received Nissan Leaves, *Fleet News* (April 11, 2014) reported. The vehicles are part of a test called “My Electric Avenue,” in which the Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution utility wants to determine the impact of multiple electric cars in a single neighborhood on the power distribution system. The households will use the Nissan electric cars for 18 months. Ten other neighbourhoods around England will also test the vehicles and electric system.

Reno, Nevada, will introduce all-electric buses to its streets soon, but the twist is that the lithium ion batteries used by the buses were developed by Reno’s Altair Nanotechnologies, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Beasley, April 1, 2014) gazetted. The batteries enable the electric buses to recharge while passengers are boarding at a stop.

In the Republic of Ireland, the town of Ennis is authorizing free parking for electric cars at two of the town’s car parks, *The Clare Champion* (April 13, 2014) says. Ennis is the first town in the Republic to offer free parking for electric cars.

ALTERNATIVE FUELS

Toyota will use methane gas from a nearby landfill to power the assembly plant near Georgetown, Kentucky that builds Camry and Avalon hybrid cars, the *company* (March 24, 2014)

³ No relationship to the editor.

announced. The plant is Toyota's largest North American plant. The new methane power system will be able to provide enough electricity to power 800 American homes and cut greenhouse gas emissions at the methane source by 90%. The new power source will be available by early 2015.

The National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, recommends that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should develop standards for natural gas vehicles and trailer technology when the EPA begins to develop new fuel standards for commercial trucks, *Transport Topics* (Miller, April 3, 2014) says. New standards for natural gas should encourage the use of the alternative fuel and as trailers grow to 53 feet and longer, they become more of a drag on fuel economy, so standards need to be set in the design of those trailers.

Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London,⁴ is organizing a European hydrogen fuel cell vehicle project called Hydrogen for Innovative Vehicles (HyFive), *Next Greencar* (Wirgman, April 4, 2014) says. The program aims to develop hydrogen fuel structure and vehicle technology. BMW, Daimler, Honda, Hyundai, and Toyota are participating. Five European Union countries are also taking part. The countries are Italy, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and England. The plan calls for three hydrogen fuel stations, one in London, Odense, and Innsbruck.

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) purchased over 1 million gallons of biodiesel for the State's Ferry System and WSDOT's medium- to heavy-duty equipment, *WSDOT* (Brady, April 10, 2014) reported. Over 687,700 gallons were used in ferries, while over 318,700 gallons was used on land.

Thorium may be the next great thing in civil nuclear power, *The Economist* (April 12, 2014) says. The Economist explains that the civilian nuclear power industry was merely a side product of military nuclear research. Uranium and plutonium became the go to power materials in civilian nuclear power because they were the materials used most successfully in nuclear warheads. Thorium proved to be too difficult to weaponize and when it was, it was too unstable to make a safe (yes, that's the word) bomb. As a result, thorium was just not looked at for civilian nuclear power. That could be changing. Both India and China are ramping up thorium research. Thorium is much easier to come by than uranium and plutonium and can develop an almost self-sustaining reaction lasting years, where plutonium and uranium needs to be refueled every 18 months. The waste from thorium reactors seems to be safer and thorium reactors work under much less pressure, which also is safer. And since thorium is much more difficult to weaponize, you don't have to worry about bad guys trying to steal your radioactive material.

COMING TO A LOCATION NEAR YOU: The latest news on new charging stations which may or may not be somewhere close to you.

United States: The Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) opened a new DC fast charger at its offices on S Street in East Sacramento, California, *Next Generation Transportation News* (March 27, 2014) reported. SMUD also has 19 lower voltage chargers,

⁴ Not to be confused with the Lord Mayor of London. The Mayor of London, responsible for Greater London Authority, is elected by population of the greater area outside the square mile of the City of London; while the Lord Mayor is elected by the City of London Corporation and is only responsible for the square-mile City of London.

although the article does not tell us if these are level one or two chargers. SMUD has 15 plug-in vehicles and plans to increase its fleet to 54 by 2017.

Connecticut Department of Transportation EV infrastructure manager, Richard C. Hanley, informs *The Hybrid Report* that the State of Connecticut has 2 DC High-Speed ("Level 3") Chargers in beta-testing at the I-95 Southbound Service Plaza in Darien, CT. The Eaton units are CHAdeMO only at present, but SAE Combo adapters will be added later in 2014. There is presently no cost to charge. Although the units are not yet "officially" open, Connecticut DOT is interested in feedback about EV user charging sessions. If you do use them, please drop an email with your comments to the CT DOT EV Infrastructure project manager at Richard.Hanley@CT.gov. Also located at this site are 4 EV Superchargers installed for a specific brand of EV car that Mr. Hanley cannot name since Connecticut DOT does not endorse products. But we can name it. It's Tesla. It's not an endorsement, just news.

The City of Tracy, California, installed a level two charger at the Tracy Transit Station on Sixth and Central, the Stockton *Record* (March 27, 2014) recorded. Two cars can charge simultaneously at the charger.

Lancaster, California, will install a fast charger at the Museum of Art & History, *Utility Products* (Editors, Electric Light & Power, March 31, 2014) reported. The installation will include an energy storage system as well.

Moses Lake, Washington, and Electrical Industry Group installed a charging station at Sinkius Square, the *Columbia Basin Herald* (Staff, April 2, 2014) heralded. The Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce is paying for the power for an undetermined "initial introductory period."

Salt Lake City will have the region's first fast charger at some date in the not too distant future, the *Kansas City Star* (Associated Press, April 3, 2014) enlightened. The charger will be installed at the County government center, although there is no indication when the charger will be open.

Electric car owners in Greensboro, North Carolina,⁵ will have a charging station installed downtown, the *Triad Business Journal* (Arcieri, April 2, 2014) blogged. The charger at the Elm/McGee parking lot is one of 10 locations throughout North Carolina where Brightfield Transportation Solutions of Asheville is installing charging stations. The charger should be ready this summer.

Central Oregon will have two new charging stations at the end of April and beginning of May, *The Bulletin* (Hammers, April 6, 2014) announces. The first of the chargers is in the town of Madras, while Warm Springs will receive the other.

The City of Denver installed quick charging stations at the Cultural Center and Performing Arts Center, Fox affiliate *KDVR Television* (Wolf, April 8, 2014) broadcast.

The city of La Porte, Indiana, between South Bend and Gary, is moving closer to establishing three charging stations, the *Herald Argus* (Fritz, April 8, 2014) watchfully heralded.

⁵ One of the editor's many former hometowns. The memory fades, but ca. 1960.

That City's Board of Public Works and Safety approved a consultant's proposal for chargers. The consultant will assist the city in finding funding, contractors, and securing permits. The City will use two of the stations for City-owned vehicles, while the public will be able to use a third station.

Ashland, Oregon, is hoping that the next new vehicle charging stations will show up in new homes under construction. The *Ashland Daily Tidings* (Aldous, April 11, 2014) says the city is offering \$100 to encourage installation of electric car chargers in new construction. Homes have to be built to Earth Advantage or Energy Star standards to get the incentive.

The Whole Foods Market at Telegraph and Ashby in Berkeley, California, opened two fast chargers recently, *Berkeleyside* (Taylor, April 10, 2014) said. The chargers were installed as part of a program instituted by the city to make it easier to get permits for new charger installation.

The Best Western Plus near the Fresno Yosemite International Airport is the first hotel in California's San Joaquin Valley to have a charger, Fresno's ABC affiliate *KFSN* (Venegas, April 10, 2014) reported. Also in Fresno, the *Business Journal* (Staff, April 11, 2014) journaled that Fresno State University will get chargers in September in the University's P2 parking lot. The University will install two level two chargers and a quick charger.

Around the World: Four chargers were installed in Exeter, England, the *Exeter Express and Echo* (March 28, 2014) quickly repeated. Four more chargers will be available later this month. The chargers were financed through funding from the United Kingdom's Office for Low Emission Vehicles.

Bath, also in England, has established charging points in three car parks, *The Bath Chronicle* (Wiltshire, March 28, 2014) chronicled. There are spaces for four cars to charge at each car park. The chargers are free through April 2015. The organization running the charging system will waive the registration fee of £50 (\$83.16) for the first 200 registrants, as well.

The heirs of the seventh Earl of Grantham will have two more electric car chargers to use in their journeys through Yorkshire. The Harrogate Borough Council will install two fast chargers after getting a grant from the previously mentioned Office for Low Emission Vehicles, *Harrogate News* (April 1, 2014) reported.

In Northern Ireland's Londonderry (or Derry, depending on your perspective) the charging station at The Diamond is gone, the *Londonderry Sentinel* (April 14, 2014) observed. The Department for Regional Development authorized regular automobiles to park in the spot and removed the parking place for electric vehicles.

OTHER TECHNOLOGY

A123 Systems the company that made lithium batteries for GM, BMW, and Fisker; went bankrupt; and brought out of bankruptcy by China's Wanxiang Group to make grid-storage devices; is giving up that business to go back into the electric car battery business, AOL's *Autoblog* (King, March 27, 2014) blogs. Wanxiang also bought the bankrupt Fisker Automotive company. Most likely, A123 Systems' batteries will go into the Fisker cars.

Toyota will put a new engine with increased fuel efficiency in 14 internal combustion engine automobiles, the *Washington Post* (Kageyama, April 10, 2014) posted. The engine was developed for hybrid cars, however, when used alone in a conventional car still promises 10% improved fuel efficiency.

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That is all.