

With many vehicles under their control, procurement professionals and government fleet managers can have a major impact, good or bad.

Clear the Air: Join the National Clean Cities Program

By Shelley Launey

Nine years ago, federal lawmakers and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recognized the important part that government agencies could play in improving our nation's air quality, and reducing our dependence on imported oil. After significant development by DOE, Congress, and many stakeholders, President George Herbert Walker Bush signed the National Energy Policy Act, now commonly called "EPAAct," in October 1992.

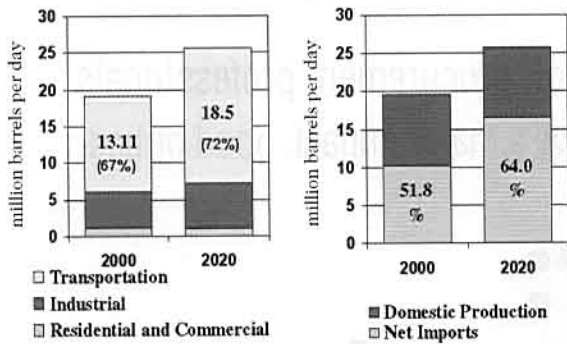
Many procurement professionals know EPAAct as the federal "stick" requiring them to purchase vehicles, in specific numbers, fueled by non-petroleum alternative transportation fuels. The list of EPAAct-approved fuels now includes natural gas, ethanol, methanol, propane, battery-electric power, hydrogen, biologically produced diesel, and certain alcohol-based liquids called P-series fuels. (EPAAct also established broad new requirements affecting buildings, power



Shelley Launey, Director of the National Clean Cities Program in the Office of Transportation Technologies, U.S. Department of Energy.



U.S. Petroleum Use



Source: EIA Annual Energy Outlook 2001

production, and energy regulation.)

However, not everyone is aware of the reasoning behind EPCA and its alternative fuels provisions. As it was being crafted a decade ago, about half of all oil consumed in the U.S. was imported. That proportion has since risen to 56 percent. Of all the oil we consume, 65 percent is used in transportation, fueling personal cars and light trucks, 18-wheelers, cargo vans, utility vehicles, transit buses, shuttles, and taxis.

Too much reliance on foreign sources carries an obvious threat to our national security. In addition, petroleum use in cars and trucks has another adverse impact on our nation—air pollution. Gasoline and diesel exhaust contain harmful carbon monoxide and unburned hydrocarbons, as well as smog-causing nitrogen oxides and carcinogenic particulate matter. Additionally, their combustion emits “greenhouse gases” such as carbon dioxide, which contribute to global warming.

EPCA was intended to lessen both problems—air pollution and foreign oil dependence—by promoting clean alternative fuels in federal and state vehicle fleets. The legislation was also intended to jumpstart a new market for alternative fuels.

Why focus on fleets? There are many reasons. As public entities, government fleets ought to be part of the solution, not just the problem. Fleets usually are centrally fueled, and often are maintained by technicians operating as a team. Many fleet vehicles operate within contained routes or locales. With many vehicles under their control, government fleet managers and procurement professionals can have a major impact, good or bad.

If EPCA is the stick behind alternative fuels, the National Clean Cities Program is the carrot. Established in 1993, Clean Cities is supported by DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. Our charge is to help you choose the right

alternative fuels, whether the choice is motivated by EPCA or is purely voluntary. We cultivate partnerships between government and industry, pairing affected fleets with private companies eager to supply vehicles, fuels, and services.

In 82 locations throughout the U.S., members of the Clean Cities Program have affirmed their commitment to alternative fuels by forming local coalitions. Most coalitions serve specific urban areas; some are county-wide; and some are regional. Members from private industry include automakers, car dealers, fuel suppliers, utilities, and professional associations. Public-sector members include federal agencies; state and local departments of health, transportation, and public transit; and administrators and officials from individual cities and counties. In all, Clean Cities has more than 4,400 members.

Through extensive “public outreach” efforts, Clean Cities aims to educate present and future alternative fuel users. Our vast realm of resources offers information about:

- Specific alternative fuel vehicles;
- Fuels and their local availability;
- Regulations and compliance;
- Tax and other incentives for the purchase and use of alternative fuel vehicles;
- Grants and other funding for projects;
- Successful deployment by existing users.

Clean Cities resources include a Web site available to all (not just members), offering program information, industry news, and an event calendar. You’ll find information about the National Clean Cities Conference, held annually at varying locations. You’ll see the Fleet Buyers Guide, offering regularly updated data to help you purchase vehicles; and plenty of information about coalitions—where to find them, and how to start one. You can connect to the Alternative Fuels Data Center, a searchable database of free documents; and to an online version of Alternative Fuel News, a print magazine published quarterly by Clean Cities.

To learn more about alternative fuels and the National Clean Cities Program, visit our Web site at www.cities.com, or call 1-800-CCITIES. ☐

GPRO article online
www.govpro.com

THE LIST OF EPCA-APPROVED FUELS NOW INCLUDES NATURAL GAS, ETHANOL, METHANOL, PROPANE, BATTERY-ELECTRIC POWER, HYDROGEN, BIOLOGICALLY PRODUCED DIESEL, AND CERTAIN ALCOHOL-BASED LIQUIDS CALLED P-SERIES FUELS.