

New research seeks to enhance alternative fuel integration in public vehicle fleets

July 17 2007

Rochester Institute of Technology and the County of Monroe, New York have created a research partnership to assess the performance of the County's fleet of E85 flex-fuel vehicles. E85 is comprised of 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline and is considered a major alternative energy option for American automobiles.

RIT's Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies will work with the County Department of Environmental Services to analyze the environmental and economic impact of these vehicles and assist the county in determining a future course for the integration of additional alternative energy technologies into their operations.

“This cooperative public-private partnership will enhance RIT's research program, while providing Monroe County with valuable technical assistance and strategic planning information to further our efforts in utilizing alternative fuels,” notes County Executive Brooks. “Monroe County maintains a fleet of 78 hybrid-electric, and E-85 flex-fuel vehicles. The research and information that will result from this partnership will enhance our efforts to protect our taxpayers, and protect our environment.”

“This partnership is a perfect example of how universities can utilize their technical expertise to assist government agencies in providing better services to their constituents while also helping to promote new industries,” adds center director Nabil Nasr. “Alternative energy will be a major technology area in the coming years and RIT's efforts will help

put our community on the cutting edge of this important field.”

Throughout the course of the research, the center will be performing a number of laboratory and field studies on the County’s “green fleet” to quantify the impact of ethanol on propulsion system durability, reliability, vehicle availability and life-cycle cost. CIMS will also be looking to work with regional technology companies seeking to test, validate and launch alternative energy products.

Additionally, the RIT-County partnership will study the potential expansion of the E85 vehicle fleet, explore additional types of flex-fuel vehicles that meet County work requirements, analyze methods to increase the amount of biodiesel used in County vehicles and research the long-range outlook for fuel cells and hydrogen power.

“We are very pleased to be collaborating with Monroe County to enhance our alternative fuel research,” adds Nasr. “This effort will assist in reducing the county’s reliance on fossil fuels, and ultimately reduce costs to taxpayers. It's a great example of how university-based research can support regional needs and economic growth. We also hope to use the data collected here to promote alternative energy implementation in additional public vehicle fleets throughout the country.”

Source: Rochester Institute of Technology

Citation: New research seeks to enhance alternative fuel integration in public vehicle fleets (2007, July 17) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-07-alternative-fuel-vehicle-fleets.html>

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