

Alternative Fuels & Vehicles Conference + Expo 2007

Conference Report: Alternative Fuels, Our Day Has Come

“Our very own inextricably connected axis of evil links dwindling oil supplies, growing climate instability and an economic engine that sputters without growth.” Those words of Annaloyd Thomason, Executive Director of AFVi kicked off the provocative General Session of the 13th national conference on alternative fuels, vehicles and advanced transportation technologies. You would have thought she knew what topics would dominate conversation most of the morning, the way she was talking.

Dwindling oil supply caught the attention of keynoter Neel Kashkari who with T. Boone Pickens offered crisp perspectives on the growing crisis. Mr. Kashkari is a senior advisor to the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, and in that capacity lent his voice to the Bush administration energy plan to reduce consumption by 20% in ten years. The most significant way to do that? Alternative energy. Entrepreneur Boone Pickens took that a step further by highlighting a recent email from Matt Simmons, a leading voice in the peak oil movement. “He said that (petroleum supply) storage is down... inventories around the world are coming down so fast now... everything is getting so tight... that you're going to see oil priced above \$80 a barrel [this year]. And he said that if you had some kind of hiccup in the system it could go to \$100 faster than a hot knife through butter.” Mr. Pickens observed that American oil wells produce 5 barrels a day while Saudi Arabia wells are producing 5,000, suggesting a correlation between peak oil and declining production.

Bringing home the climate change risks were two Californians of note. Terry Tamminen, former advisor to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and author of the recent book *Lives Per Gallon*, observed that out of control emissions in California, the "richest state in the richest country in the history of the world," 80 percent of the residents live in areas that are officially designated as "unhealthy." Former fifteen year Congressman Pete McCloskey echoed the health threats by saying that not only does he believe in global warming but carbon dioxide is the most dangerous threat we are facing. Mr. McCloskey believes that our heavy reliance on oil has environmental repercussions and helps to finance global terrorism. That's a point James Woolsey, former CIA Director strongly concurs with. “We have risks to our infrastructure and our lives,” said Mr. Woolsey citing the billions of dollars Saudi Arabia gets from U.S. oil purchases which find their way to fund terrorist organizations that don't like us so much.

And so, decreasing oil supply, climate change and dependence on rogue regimes for our oil set the backdrop for the need for fuel and vehicle solutions that drive us away from oil. A recurring theme among fleet managers was “What is out there for me to buy?” Information on alternative fuel vehicle purchase options were presented everywhere from the EXPO Hall with more than 100 exhibitors to the Ride-n-Drive where attendees could test drive vehicles. There were four product roll-out sessions and for the first time there was one devoted to Neighborhood Electric Vehicles and one that focused on heavy-duty. Other sessions dealt with building an alternative fuel fleet and workshops devoted to the niche markets of airports, refuse, school and transit buses, and delivery.

AFVi held a private dinner for a few dozen fleets to gain a better understanding of the issues facing them. Like many of the other attendees, the resounding feedback was that once they have received guidance to incorporate alternative fuels they need a broad range of tools to understand how to make that happen. Toward that end more than 500 people signed up for an AFVi alternative fuel vehicle primer webinar that was held at the end of April. The demand for more in-depth information was so tremendous that we are following that up with an AFV Training Course that will be held in November in Chicago.

Are you interested in learning more about the conference? You can do that right now by clicking on this link which will take you to well over 100 presentations that were given at the conference. <http://www.afvi.org/conference-presentation.html> Best of all, as of right now, there's no charge. See what you missed and then mark your calendar for the 14th conference to take place May 11-14, 2008 in Las Vegas.