

## Next Generation Rechargeable Hybrids Gaining Wider Support

*Experts available to discuss implications of new, aggressively-electric hybrids vehicles that can help end America's 'addiction' to imported oil, while reducing greenhouse gases.*

(PRWEB) April 12, 2005 -- An unusual alliance of the political left and the right is throwing its support behind a newly emerging, evolutionary adaptation of gasoline-electric hybrid vehicles. Unlike current hybrid models, these new plug-in hybrids will give owners the choice of running them off electric power, gasoline or renewable biofuels.

### Background

A relative recent phenomenon, hybrids from Honda, Toyota and Ford are expanding their market share in North America at an accelerating rate. In 2004, Toyota Prius sales were up 118%. Similarly, Honda saw its hybrid sales grow from just under 10,000 vehicles in 1999 to nearly 50,000 in 2003.

Hybrids use a combination of internal combustion engine and electric drive motors, powered by high energy battery packs deftly hidden from view, to deliver improved fuel efficiency, enhanced performance and reduced greenhouse gas and tailpipe emissions. And while hybrid-drive architecture vary among carmakers, they do share one thing in common: no current models require owners to plug them in to recharge their batteries. The cars are self-recharging from the engine and brakes; and Toyota and Honda have labored hard to make sure potential buyers do not confuse hybrids with battery electric cars.

### New Transportation Paradigm Emerging

But just as consumers are beginning to recognize the value of gasoline-electric hybrid vehicles in terms of their improved fuel efficiency -- and increasingly better performance compared to non-hybrid models; as in the case of the new Honda Accord Hybrid and Lexus RX400h -- proponents of home-rechargeable, plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) are starting to make political inroads within Washington policy circles.

Here are some recent developments:

- \* Austin, Texas city council endorses flexible fuel, gasoline-optional, PHEVs
- \* Austin Energy, the city's public utility, plans to offer substantial consumer rebates on PHEVs
- \* Set America Free □ a "green-neocon" coalition -- endorses development of PHEVs
- \* National Energy Policy Commission study finds PHEVs rank top among automobile development pathways
- \* Energy Future Coalition, made up of 31 former national security experts and Republican and Democratic Presidential advisers, recommends development of plug-in hybrids.
- \* New York Times and Business Week have featured major articles on plug-in hybrids.
- \* A recent technical workshop on plug-in hybrids in Monaco attracts three times the anticipated audience.

When hybrids can be recharged from the local utility grid -- or even a homeowner's solar panels -- some, or most, of the energy propelling the car comes from domestically-produced electric power, replacing imported oil. This has important national security, global warming and local air quality implications. While no hybrid car maker currently offers consumers PHEV, it would require relatively minor changes to facilitate this capability, especially in the current model Toyota and Ford hybrids, which already have some limited electric-only driving range.

While the barriers are not trivial -- primarily because of the initial cost of a larger battery pack -- two California-based organizations are solving the engineering problems; and one has demonstrated a home-rechargeable, aggressively-electric Prius hybrid that is capable of delivering 120-180 mpg fuel efficiency numbers for the first sixty miles of range, triple the range of the current Prius.

The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) in Palo Alto, CA. and Austin Energy project that consumers who home recharge their plug-in hybrids will pay electric costs equivalent of less than 60 cents a gallon of gasoline. And in the city of Austin's case, if home recharging is done at night on Austin's Green Rate, the vehicles will end up being recharged primarily by wind energy from farms in west Texas, making these cars almost entirely wind-powered.

This is why groups as politically disparate as the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security and the National Resources Defense Council Foundation have joined forces, with others, to endorse the development of plug-in hybrid vehicles. They believe it is not just good for the environment and the consumer's pocket book, it's critical to national security.

In addition to the following experts who are available to discuss plug-in hybrid technology with the media, EV World (<http://www.evworld.com>) features more information on modern electric-drive technology.

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