



The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report

February 29, 2016

The fine print: 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 articles may require free registration or paid subscriptions to access. *The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report* (ISSN: 1946-1011) is compiled, written, and edited by Thomas L. R. Smith, Ph. D. (hereinafter referred to as “The Editor”), Economic Analysis Branch of the Budget and Financial Analysis Division, Washington State Department of Transportation. Contact *The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report’s* editor at smithtm@wsdot.wa.gov or (360) 705-7941. Contributions of news items, original articles, and positive comments about *The Report* are welcome.

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HYBRIDS

Toyota will start building a new hybrid model in Turkey, *Young Herald* (Adkins, February 13, 2016) heralded. This will be Toyota’s third hybrid built in Europe, with the Auris built in the United Kingdom and the Yaris hybrid build in France. The new hybrid goes by the name C-HR, but that’s a concept vehicle. The real name will be released in March at the Geneva autoshow. Toyota will add 1,000 employees to the plant.

Volkswagen issued a recall for Touareg hybrids built between 2011 and 2015 for a fire hazard, *The Car Connection* (Read, February 15, 2016) connects. It seems that water does not drain out the hybrid battery storage compartment, which may cause batteries to short, in turn, causing a fire. There are 825 Touaregs involved in the recall.

California hybrid owners were once exempt from smog checks. The *San Jose Mercury-News* (Richards, February 16, 2016) says the exemption has ended. Hybrids were exempt for practical reasons: since hybrids tend to shut down their engines when at a stopped, tailpipe emissions could not be checked. New technology has evolved that allow hybrid emissions to be checked, so now hybrids that are older than six model years must have their emissions checked, just like a gasoline car.

It appears the most popular neighborhoods for Prius registrations in the Seattle area are Tukwila and SeaTac, *The Seattle Times* (Balk, February 16, 2015) tells. Seattle registrations for the hybrid, at 5% of vehicles owned, are double the national average, but Tukwila and SeaTac even exceeds Seattle neighborhoods for the car once billed as “the most liberal car ever.” The article offers one possible reason for high registrations in Seattle’s southend from anecdotal evidence: Uber drivers. From interviews of car salesmen, apparently Prii are popular among ride-service drivers.

Managers at Daimler are required to drive hybrid and electric cars, *Fortune* (Korosec, February 18, 2016) says. The company does not require the rank and file to drive, but does offer the charge@work program for employees to use electric vehicles for work and personal use.

Tennessee becomes the latest State to reject an additional fee for hybrid and electric vehicles, the *Knoxville News Sentinel* (Humphrey, February 21, 2016) states. Senate Bill 1451, which required hybrid owners to pay a \$75 fee and electric car owners to pay a \$150 fee, didn't even get a motion for passage. It didn't even get a debate. The bill's sponsor said it would end the alleged "free ride" electric car owners get. While no one commented in the Senate committee, it seems that most Tennessee pols want to look at these fees as part of a larger transportation revenue package.

General Motors will begin selling mild hybrid Silverado and Sierra pickup trucks in California, *Work Truck Magazine* (February 25, 2016) writes. The two trucks will come with stop-start systems and regenerative braking. There will also be an electric motor that provides additional power on acceleration and for passing. GM will offer 700 mild hybrid trucks, but could increase the number if sales are good.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

General Motors announced it will build the Ampera-e, the European Version of its all-electric Bolt, in the United States, *Automotive News Europe* (Staff, February 15, 2016) elucidates. The car will be built at the same plant that builds the Bolt for U. S. consumption. It is unclear if the Ampera-e will also come in a right-hand drive model for the United Kingdom.

The Antelope Valley Transit Authority (Williams, February 11, 2016), which we assume operates in California's Antelope Valley, announce that with its purchase of 85 all-electric BYD buses, it will become the nation's "first 100 percent electric public transit fleet." The transit agencies will field the buses over the next five years. BYD Motors will provide 40 foot, 45 foot, and 60 foot models.

You can get a new Tesla S for just \$500, *Mental Floss* (LaSane, February 16, 2016) mentions. There are a few caveats for the prospective Tesla driver: they should be between the ages of 3 and 8 and need to weigh less than 81 pounds. The Tesla S is made by Radio Flyer and can go from 3 to 6 miles per hour. The Tesla has a jack for headphones and an MP3 player. It also has a working trunk.

As part of Volkswagen's retribution for fudging its emissions' testing, The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wants Volkswagen to make electric cars in the U. S., *The Guardian* (Reuters, February 21, 2016) guides. There is no official word from the EPA or Volkswagen, but according to reports, the two organizations are in talks.

ALTERNATIVE FUELS

Toyota told dealers not to deliver any more hydrogen-fuel Mirais, *InsideEVs* (Cole, January 16, 2016) says. The problem is that there just aren't enough fueling stations. Added to that, many of the fueling stations that exist don't work well. Toyota sold 72 Mirais in Southern California, but with insufficient stations, Toyota does not want the Mirai to sit on the side of the road without fuel. Toyota believes 48 stations will be on line this year. There is no word when Toyota will lift the non-delivery advisory.

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: Power company Avista asked the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) for permission to establish a 265 charging station network in eastern Washington, *KOMO News* (Associated Press, February 14, 2016) notes. If the WUTC approves, Avista wants to put up to 120 chargers in private residences, 100 chargers at businesses, and 45 in public places. The network will have seven fast chargers.

The Fire Department of New York City will install 21 charging stations for ambulances in Queens, *QNS* (Giudice, February 15, 2016) quotes. Unlike most charging stations, these are not for electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles. In New York, the Fire Department parks ambulances at various places around the city, where they can quickly respond to emergency calls. The ambulances idle when they are parked so that drivers can continue to monitor their radios for calls and go at a moment's notice. The charging stations will run the vehicle radios so that the driver can shut down the engine, reducing fuel usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

Green Mountain Power opened a new charging station in Waterbury, Vermont, the *utility* (February 26, 2016) said in a press release. The level 2 charger is at Waterbury's Municipal Center.

Around the World: The McDonald's off the A47 in Norwich, England, between Blofield and Brundall has a charging station available, the *Eastern Daily Press* (Royall, February 17, 2016) pressed. Drive-through customers can use the charger for free, however, they will have to stop and charge, so we wonder how that will work out.

Drivers in the United Kingdom now have a 683-mile charging network that stretches from border to border, *Autocar* (Bagnall, February 25, 2016) announced. The Raptic Charge Network has 74 fast chargers. It was funded by Nissan, BMW, Renault, Volkswagen, and the European Union.

OTHER TECHNOLOGY

Nothing to see here.

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That’ll do.