

PART 6 - THE SKY IS FALLING - THE SKY IS FALLING

HYBRIDS CONTINUED WHY DOESN'T GM HAVE A HYBRID?



Chuck Nicholson

They do—lots of them. But silly GM didn't think the mission was to build a few high priced little cars with a reliability question. Tom Stephens, group VP of GM power train explains, *"General Motors' hybrid strategy focuses on first applying hybrid technology to the highest fuel consuming vehicles, such as transit buses and full size pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles. A positive impact the whole country could feel."* Smog in America's largest cities is a serious issue that affects the lives and health of millions of Americans. You don't have to stand on a sidewalk in a big city very long to realize how polluting a city bus is.

TRANSIT BUSES FIRST

On October 21, 2003 GM began delivery of 235 new buses with clean hybrid power that saves the Seattle area 750,000 gallons of fuel per year. That's equal to replacing more than 8,000 internal combustion engine cars. GM hybrid transit buses increase fuel economy by up to 60% – reduce certain emissions up to a staggering 90% while delivering 50% better acceleration. The transit bus is a perfect fit for making a hybrid.

For example:

- It is a high fuel consuming vehicle
- It has high usage, 18 hours a day, 6-7 days a week
- It has an ideal duty cycle for hybrids – stop and go city traffic where the most can be gotten out of regenerative braking, which captures energy normally lost as brake heat and returns it to the vehicles energy storage system (the battery) for reuse. With hybrid buses, frequent stops are good.
- Building large hybrid applications is the best way to “work the bugs out” so that future small vehicles will be more reliable.

MORE GM HYBRID BUSES ENTER SERVICE

- On December 21, 2004 the city of Albuquerque, NM added GM hybrid buses to its fleet.
- On January 24, 2005 Indianapolis, IN added GM hybrid buses to their fleet.
- On April 25, 2005 the National Park Service took delivery of 18 GM hybrid buses, for use in Yosemite National Park, the first to operate in a US National Park.
- Other cities that have added GM hybrid transit buses to their fleet are: Philadelphia, Houston, Minneapolis, Portland, Honolulu, Austin, Salt Lake City, Hartford, Conn., and Newark, NJ. Some of these cities are phasing in hybrid buses and haven't yet replaced their whole fleet; however, Mr. Stephens stated that if just the nine largest transit markets in the United States would replace their entire bus fleets with GM hybrid buses it would result in annual savings of more than 40 MILLION gallons of fuel. That's equivalent to more than half a million small hybrid passenger vehicles that GM competitors are capturing the headlines with.



I have to ask myself: If these other auto manufacturers truly care about saving our country precious oil and if they truly care about our environment, does it make any sense why they would begin hybrid production on small vehicles that are already pretty good on fuel economy with reasonably low emissions, while ignoring large fuel guzzling, smoke spewing vehicles that are at the heart of America's foreign oil and clean air problem? Could it be that their only real motive is image after all?

To date, GM has placed more hybrid busses into service across the USA than Honda, Toyota and Ford has sold passenger hybrid cars, saving America millions more gallons of fuel and cutting harmful emissions and smog tremendously. The only problem is that the media doesn't write about it.

On June 29, 2005 the Peter Hart Research Associates released a survey which showed while Americans favor efforts aimed at reducing our dependence on foreign oil, they give too much credit to Japanese automakers to meet the challenge. Elizabeth Lowery, GM VP for environment and energy, stated, *"But while the survey shows that Americans support the same goals that are at the heart of GM's overall advanced technology for improving the efficiency, it's troubling what little credit we're getting."*

I wonder what it would take to get the media to write something positive about GM's hybrid efforts—wait...I have it...Let's talk Leonardo DiCaprio into riding a GM hybrid bus...the media is sure to follow.

GM HYBRID TRUCKS, SUVs AND CARS – COMING SOON

In 2004 General Motors introduced the world's first full-size hybrid pickup. While they are currently only available in certain western and southern states, they will be rolled out nationally soon. For example, on April 7, 2005, Fort Wayne, IN took delivery of a group of new GM hybrid pickup trucks. These hybrid Chevrolet Silverados and GMC Sierras give the highest city fuel economy of any full size truck, and are equipped with a high power (2004w) mobile generator with outlets that can power heavy duty power tools and more – a feature not offered by other hybrids. They also offer the ability to recharge while braking, and have the same durability and reliability as the gasoline fueled version. For 2006, GM will introduce a hybrid SUV and will be followed a year later by a full sized hybrid Chevy Tahoe and GMC Yukon SUVs. A hybrid Chevrolet Malibu will also be introduced in the near future. When hybrids are ready for mainstream use, you can be assured GM will be the leader in affordability and reliability.

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