

Toyota promises plug-in hybrid vehicle by 2010

By YURI KAGEYAMA, The Associated Press

Wash. Post, Modesto Bee, USA Today, Merced Sun-Star and other papers Wed., June 11, 2008

TOKYO -- Toyota is introducing a plug-in hybrid with next-generation lithium-ion batteries in Japan, the U.S. and Europe by 2010, under a widespread strategy to be green outlined Wednesday.

The ecological gas-electric vehicles, which can be recharged from a home electrical outlet, will target leasing customers, Toyota Motor Corp. said. Such plug-in hybrids can run longer as an electric vehicle than regular hybrids, and are cleaner.

Lithium-ion batteries, now common in laptops, produce more power and are smaller than nickel-metal hydride batteries used in hybrids now.

The joint venture that Toyota set up with Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., which makes Panasonic products, will begin producing lithium-ion batteries in 2009 and move into full-scale production in 2010, Toyota said.

Toyota also said it's setting up a battery research department later this month to develop an innovative battery that can outperform even that lithium-ion battery.

Japan's top automaker, which leads the industry in gas-electric hybrids, has said it will rev up hybrid sales to 1 million a year sometime after 2010.

Hybrids reduce pollution and emissions that are linked to global warming by switching between a gas engine and an electric motor to deliver better mileage than comparable standard cars. Their popularity is growing amid soaring oil prices and worries about global warming.

"Without focusing on measures to address global warming and energy issues, there can be no future for our auto business," Toyota President Katsuaki Watanabe told reporters at a Tokyo hall.

He said developing breakthrough technology was critical to allow Toyota and other automakers to continue to grow while avoiding damage to the environment.

The Prius, which has been on sale for more than a decade, recently reached cumulative sales of 1 million vehicles. When including other Toyota hybrids, the company said it sold 1.5 million hybrids so far around the world.

Toyota said it is also working on fuel cell vehicles, which produce no pollution by running on the energy produced when hydrogen combines with oxygen in the air to produce water.

It is also improving mileage of all its models, including gasoline engine and clean diesel vehicles, it said.

The company plans to set up more environmentally friendly factories that will produce fewer carbon gas emissions and develop production techniques that require less energy, using solar energy and planting trees, Watanabe said.

On Tuesday, Toyota said it will start making the Camry hybrid in Australia and Thailand as part of its efforts to step up production of "green" cars around the world.

The two plants were only Toyota's second and third overseas production point for the Camry hybrid after its Kentucky plant in the U.S. The only other nation where Toyota manufactures its hybrids besides Japan is China.

Toyota, close to overtaking General Motors Corp. as the world's No. 1 automaker, faces competition from rivals, which are also all working on ecological technology.

For 2010, General Motors is planning a Chevrolet Volt plug-in electric vehicle, while Nissan Motor Co. is planning electric vehicles for the U.S. and Japan. Honda Motor Co. is also developing new hybrid models, targeting sales of 500,000 hybrids a year sometime after 2010.

Summer temps, air quality return to the Valley

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, June 11, 2008

The warm up will continue today, with highs reaching 88 degrees. Lows will be in the mid 50s.

The air quality forecast for today is "unhealthy for sensitive groups."

Tomorrow will be warmer with highs around 94. The weekend is expected to bring triple digit temperatures.

Developer plans high-tech complex in East Palo Alto, dubbed "Bay Business Park"

By Banks Albach, Palo Alto Daily News

In the Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Plans for a new business complex geared toward high-tech and biotech startups are moving forward in East Palo Alto.

Developer Tig Tarlton, who created the 900,000-square-foot Menlo Business Park, is seeking to build about 90,000 square feet of research, business development and administrative space on a 5-acre lot at 2519 Pulgas Ave., near Bay Road.

The East Palo Alto Planning Commission was set to review and approve the project's environmental review Monday night, but the staff report arrived too late for each commissioner to review it thoroughly. The commission tabled the vote until its next meeting.

Most of the site is vacant and surrounded by industrial properties. There are two warehouses and a single-family home on the southeast section of the land. The developer plans to demolish the existing structures.

Tarlton's son, John, told the commission that he expects the new complex, dubbed Bay Business Park I, to attract startup companies that are in the research phase, rather than full-scale production. He said an average tenant likely will take up between 3,000 and 10,000 square feet.

"Over the last 25 years, we've learned how to build research facilities that will attract," said John Tarlton.

The Tarltons are hopeful the commission agrees with their preliminary findings on environmental impacts that conclude the project will have a negligible effect on traffic, noise, air quality and storm drainage.

The proposed building is just 30 feet high and won't house companies in production, meaning few hazardous materials will be handled at the site, John Tarlton said.

Commission Vice Chairman Carlos Romero said the new complex could be the start of a new trend in East Palo Alto.

"In a way, you're the first one on the block, and that's good for you," Romero told John Tarlton.

"But we need to think about what we are bringing to the community."

The Planning Commission meets next June 23, when commissioners will take up the project's environmental review and architectural supervision. A "yes" vote on both items would forward the project to the City Council for a review.

Strong Action Urged to Curb Warming

By Andrew C. Revkin

N.Y. Times, Wed., June 11, 2008

The scientific academies of 13 countries on Tuesday urged the world to act more forcefully to limit the threat posed by human-driven global warming.

In a joint statement, the academies of the Group of 8 industrialized countries — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States — and of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa called on the industrialized countries to lead a “transition to a low-carbon society” and aggressively move to limit impacts from changes in climate that are already under way and impossible to stop.

The statement, posted by the <http://www.nas.edu> National Academy of Sciences in the United States, urged the Group of 8 countries to move beyond last year's pledge to consider halving global emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 and “make maximum efforts” to reach this target.

The academies recommended speeding the adoption of new energy technologies and encouraging changes in behavior that curb energy use and greenhouse-gas emissions. They also urged investing more to improve solar and nuclear energy technologies and in projects to capture and permanently store carbon dioxide produced by power plants. The academies also said it was necessary to study artificial “geoengineering” methods for stabilizing climate, as well as large-scale reforestation.

[N.Y. Times editorial, Wed., June 11, 2008:](#)

Another Failure on Climate Change

The most obvious lesson to be learned from the Senate's failure to mount any sort of grown-up debate on climate change last week is that the country needs a new occupant in the White House.

By that we mean a president who not only understands and cares deeply about the issue — which both Senators Barack Obama and John McCain say they do, and which President Bush clearly does not — but who is willing to invest the time and the political capital necessary to push good legislation through Congress.

The bill sought to reduce American emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by nearly 70 percent by 2050, short of what most climate scientists believe is necessary but an important first step.

The Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, trumpeted climate change as “the most important issue facing the world today,” and all of the players insisted they understood the stakes. Yet after three-and-one-half days of unhelpful partisan sniping, the Democratic leadership pulled the bill from the floor when only 48 senators voted to prevent a threatened Republican filibuster.

There was blame enough to go around. Republicans and some Democrats complained — not without reason — that the bill's manager, Barbara Boxer, had spent too little time in preliminary hearings discussing its potential economic impact. She also confused matters by adding last-minute amendments, including one aimed at reducing the federal deficit, that seemed to have little to do with the issue at hand.

The timing was terrible. A bill that would inevitably raise energy prices did not sit well with senators dealing with record gasoline prices. And a Republican leadership more interested in protecting industry than the environment behaved like babies, at one point spitefully forcing a complete reading of the 492-page bill, sapping any political momentum.

Ms. Boxer and the environmental community still tried for a positive spin, noting that 54 senators altogether — including six absentees who wrote letters expressing support — favored the bill, a substantial increase over the 38 senators who supported a less-aggressive measure in 2005.

Yet of those 54, about 10 — among them liberal, rust-belt senators — said they would not have actually voted for the bill unless it was amended to provide more help to industries (and their workers) that would bear the heaviest burden of reducing emissions.

There are other fault lines. One huge issue that was not even addressed in last week's truncated discussion is what to do with the enormous sums of money likely to be raised by selling emission quotas to industry.

Some senators would invest most of that money in clean technologies — wind, solar, even nuclear power — and in a new generation of coal-fired plants that could capture and store carbon emissions. Others would return a sizable share of the proceeds to consumers to help ease the pain of higher energy bills.

No one ever said that dealing with climate change would be easy or cost-free. But we expected better from the Senate. We hope the next president will have the necessary conviction and stamina — and a real sense of urgency. Too much time has been wasted.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letters to the Editor, Wednesday, June 11, 2008:](#)

Big West expansion draws praise, fears Use reason, not fear

With regard to the recent editorial on Big West's expansion, I do not understand *The Californian's* motivation.

The editorial proclaimed, "But its continued operation and its expansion depend on its ability to be a safe neighbor."

Inflammatory phrases were used, such as "potentially deadly acid," "if all the precautions are not taken, this entire community will be at risk" and "Big West uses pure ammonia, which presents a significant risk."

The facts are that a cup (eight ounces) of anhydrous ammonia was spilled and all the detectors and controls operated as designed.

Do we want to sacrifice construction and operator jobs, property taxes and the national fuel supply to a very limited risk?

Closure would have a short-term benefit of development nearby, like the current encroachment, but a community cannot be sustained without value-added productivity providing outside income. Mine closure destroyed the economy of countless West Virginia communities.

Please, let's reduce mind numbing fear, consider risk/benefit analysis and use reason.

RAY REILLY, Bakersfield

Don't insult residents

Your recent story on the Big West debate illustrated the industry's use of two sophisticated public relations strategies, used successfully to impose a disaster risk technology, modified hydrogen fluoride catalyst, in Mobil Oil's Torrance facility: "quantitative risk assessment" (QRA) combined with "risk communication (RC)."

A closer look at the Torrance experience would not reassure Bakersfield citizens.

Big West has recently hired prominent nuclear and oil company disaster risk consultant Steve Maher, who helped persuade Torrance officials to accept MHF as "safe enough," with the approval of Torrance Fire Chief Scott Adams. Surprise, former Chief Adams now works for Steve Maher.

A quantitative risk assessment is a voluminous set of technical documents which involve literally thousands of "engineering judgments," rife with sometimes-admitted "uncertainties," as well as arcane calculations. This is well-disguised pseudo-science, as the European Community's 2002 "Benchmark study" showed, requiring fire chiefs and communities to give faith-based assent or not to the pronouncements of the QRA priesthood.

Industry's sophisticated "risk communication" strategies "reassure" at-risk communities about ultrahazardous facilities, calming down "outraged" citizens patronizingly considered as "irrationally fearful" because they supposedly lack technical smarts.

Kern County citizens and officials need to hear the full history of oil industry recklessness in imposing disaster risks and keeping hidden their own worst-case disaster scenarios. Big West's \$3 billion parent company, Flying J, should drop its dubious technical tactics and insulting public relations. It can well afford to use non-disaster technologies in Bakersfield.

FRED MILLAR, Arlington, Va.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Wed., June 11, 2008:](#)

'Chicken Little stories'

With great pleasure, I read the story in the June 6 Bee about the "Big Green Boondoggle" [the global warming bill] being shelved for now. Unfortunately, it will be back, most likely early in the next congressional session.

Cleaning the air is good. Thinking we can stop climate change is futile. The "global cooling" story failed to gain sustaining traction 30 years ago, but "global warming" is going strong, thanks to people like Al Gore.

Social engineers live for causes like catastrophic earth-threatening scenarios to remake society as they think it should be. Billions of dollars to change the climate of the Earth, and ruin our economy, along with those of other countries.

Britain apparently has bought into it, but the liberals have been ruining Great Britain for decades. What's a few more taxes on an already overtaxed economy?

Hope I live long enough to see the next cycle of Chicken Little stories take hold with the elitists who want to change the world at the expense of the regular people.

Roy Bailey, Sanger

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses San Diego ponies up to the polluting trucks. San Diego port has decided to join other Californian ports with the plan to substitute heavy duty diesel trucks for newer model trucks that pollute less. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Se suma San Diego a la sustitución de camiones contaminantes

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe Wednesday, June 11, 2008

El puerto de San Diego informó que se unificará con el resto de las terminales marítimas en California, en una plan para sustituir viejos camiones de carga altamente contaminantes y motores de diesel por modelos más recientes que deterioren menos el aire.

Autoridades de dicho puerto, de la Administración Distrital de Contaminación del Aire y de la oficina estatal de Recursos del Aire de California se reunirán con camioneros el lunes para recoger opiniones y presentar alternativas al proyecto.

De acuerdo con autoridades estatales, los puertos son los principales focos de contaminación. En el plan participan conjuntamente las terminales de Oakland, Long Beach y Los Ángeles.