

COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS (CNG) VEHICLE INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Vehicles that run on compressed natural gas are the cleanest internal combustion vehicles available today based on research conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency. By way of example, when Honda conducted final testing on the Civic GX (CNG) model, scientists and engineers in a lab setting ran a GX engine for 50,000 miles without changing the motor oil. At the end of the test, the oil was placed in a clear glass beaker and put on a shelf with beakers containing fresh oil. No one could tell the difference between the oil that had been run for 50,000 miles and the oil just out of the can.

The City of Vacaville, the national leader in residential alternative fuel vehicle incentive programs on a per capita basis, has established the goal of raising public awareness and providing interested individuals with viable options to gas-powered vehicles.

In Vacaville, residents can lease or purchase a Honda Civic GX at a reduced price thanks to federal air quality grant funding the City has acquired to cover a portion of the incremental costs. The grant money helps offset some of the \$6,830 that it takes Honda to manufacture one of these eco-friendly vehicles; and in conjunction with other federal, state, and dealership incentives, the result is that qualified customers end up paying about the same price for a natural gas-powered vehicle (about \$18,000) as they would a gasoline-powered model.

Under grant rules, in order for participants to qualify, they must live or work full-time in the northeastern portion of Solano County: Vacaville, Dixon or Rio Vista.

Vacaville has its own public refueling CNG station at the Pacific Gas & Electric service facility on Peabody Road. The station is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and vehicle owners need only obtain from PG&E a refueling card, which looks and operates like a credit card. A bill arrives once a month. You just pay for what you use. There are no additional fees.

There are presently 24 PG&E CNG fueling stations across Northern California, with new ones being built at the rate of one to two per year. In addition, there are 22 non-PG&E CNG fueling stations.

While dedicated CNG vehicles are primarily touted as being eco-friendly, they also provide their drivers with another useful benefit: access to the carpool lanes without passengers. Dedicated CNG vehicles are also exempt from bridge tolls during commute hours.

As of December 2009, 135 participants have taken advantage of this unique and innovative incentive program. In addition, American Honda Motor Company has loaned the City of Vacaville a 2009 Civic GX, which interested drivers can use for a two-day trial. Anyone interested in additional information can contact Ed Huestis at (707) 449-5424, or via e-mail at ehuestis@cityofvacaville.com.