

# Re: Imagine: 500 Miles Per Gallon

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<sts3234@xxxxxxxx> wrote in message  
<news:1154654571.971885.49710@xx>

Imagine: 500 Miles Per Gallon

[snip]

Replace the conventional fuel tank with a flexible-fuel tank that can run on a combination of 15 percent petroleum and 85 percent ethanol or methanol, and you get between 400 and 500 miles per gallon of gasoline. (You don't get 500 miles per gallon of fuel, but the crucial task is to lessen the use of petroleum. And ethanol and methanol are much cheaper than gasoline, so fuel costs would drop dramatically.)

The real problem is the amount of energy we use (and waste), and not so much the source. I have read that even if all suitable land in the US was used for crops for methanol production, it would only meet about 20% of our present needs. We have become spoiled by artificially cheap energy costs, and the great majority of people have bought into the mentality of conspicuous consumption, and the use of excessive horsepower on the roads as compensation for personal inadequacies and frustration with a boring life.

I'm sure oil companies like to sell as much of their product as quickly as possible to maximize profits and growth, so they have used sexy advertising to glamorize powerful vehicles and aggressive driving. Car companies provide what people want, and until recently that was mostly "bigger and more powerful". There have always been a small segment of the population that has sought the noble goals of fuel economy and energy efficiency, but they have often been ridiculed by the majority.

It will take a huge increase in fuel costs for the average Joe to make drastic changes in driving habits and vehicles. For most people, gasoline costs are still only about 3-5% of total budget, and there is a strongly ingrained emotional barrier to making a major lifestyle change in order to conserve. I think Dick Cheney said our American Lifestyle was

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non-negotiable. We will do whatever is necessary to keep driving gas-guzzling tanks in a daily rage-laced road race (say that three times fast!)

So, gasoline consumption is a very inelastic commodity, and prices can soar without affecting it much. In fact, it might make people more angry, so they drive faster and more aggressively, using even more fuel. The only ultimate solution is a change in attitude, and I don't see that coming anytime soon. We can probably cut our need for foreign oil about 10% by using ethanol, but we can cut it by 30% or more if everyone would buy and use an inexpensive and economical second car (preferably used, and help keep local repair shops in business). Hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and full EVs are also helpful, but then the auto makers opt for bigger engines and boastful 0-60 figures, while being proud of maybe 25-30 MPG.

BTW, my 1998 Saturn SL1 averages 36 MPG and can get 45 Hwy, so I have done my part to reduce my impact on the problem.

Paul

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