GM Teams Up To Helm Hawaii's Hydrogen Car Project

HONOLULU (AP) — The Gas Co. and General Motors Co. have teamed up on a pilot project to test hydrogen refueling technology for fuel cell vehicles in Hawaii.

The companies said Tuesday that the project will take advantage of The Gas Co.'s 1,000 miles of pipeline on Oahu and its ability to produce hydrogen at its plant at Campbell Industrial Park, which makes synthetic natural gas from byproducts of imported petroleum.

The gasses would be separated at fueling stations located along the pipeline so fuel cell vehicles could use the hydrogen.

"This is the type of enabler that a hydrogen transportation infrastructure needs because it addresses both the source of the hydrogen and a feasible way to deliver it for fuel cell vehicle use," said Charles Freese, executive director of GM Global Fuel Cell Activities. "The Hawaii infrastructure could eventually support tens of thousands of fuel cell vehicles.

"Hawaii is uniquely positioned and motivated to make hydrogen-powered fuel cell transportation a reality because it depends on imported petroleum for 90 percent of its energy," he said.

The companies said the project goes along with the state's goal of obtaining 70 percent of its energy from clean sources by 2030.

"We have been delivering as much as 12 percent hydrogen made from renewable sources to our gas customers over the last two to three years and expect we can deliver even greater quantities of hydrogen as demand increases," said Jeffrey Kissel, president and CEO of The Gas Co. "By delivering hydrogen through our existing infrastructure as vehicle fuel wherever we have gas, The Gas Co. expands its key role of supporting Hawaii's clean energy future."

Depending on how the pricing for the hydrogen is set, it could be available at the equivalent price of gasoline or less, the companies said.

Sen. Dan Inouye, D-Hawaii, said he supports the project.

"It is an important step forward in the establishment of a hydrogen transportation infrastructure upon which new fleets, both military and civilian, can be tested and utilized," Inouye said in the companies' announcement.

"Every step to reduce our dependency on foreign oil is a move forward," he said.

Detroit-based GM said it has invested more than $1.5 billion in fuel cell transportation in the last 15 years, and is developing a production-intent fuel cell system that could be ready for commercialization in 2015.

The Gas Co. is a subsidiary of Macquarie Infrastructure Co.

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