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Public service commissioner pushes for alternative fuel vehicles

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Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

Roger Moore with Wade Ford of Smyrna, left, talks with Chuck Durant with Darien Telephone Company, Inc. about Ford's alternative fuel cars Wednesday at the 5th annual Georgia Alternative Fuel Vehicle Roadshow at Sea Palms on St. Simons Island.



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Posted Thursday, June 25, 2015 12:00 am

By MICHAEL HALL The Brunswick News | 0 comments



Posted on Jun 25, 2015 by Michael Hall

Vehicles lined up outside the Sea Palms Conference Center Wednesday hid happy little secrets under their hoods that a Georgia public service commissioner hopes will spread quickly around the state.

What may have looked like the normal 3.7 liter V6 engine used to power a Ford Police Interceptor was really a technological wonder that could save police departments millions in the long term on fuel costs.

The Interceptor on display was as part of the 5th Annual Alternative Vehicles Roadshow that included electric Nissan Leafs, plug-in hybrid Chevrolet Volts and other variations of cars that use fuels other than just gasoline.

The police car ran on a mix of regular gasoline and compressed natural gas, or CNG, said Roger Moore of Wade Ford in Smyrna. The engine cranks using gasoline and then switches to run on CNG, lowering fuel costs and increasing efficiency. As it is running, the engine will switch between the two fuel types as more power is needed for acceleration or depending on the driving situation.

"CNG will save you between \$1 and \$1.50 per gallon," Moore said. "To me that is a great place to start (saving money)."

With police departments often using the most fuel of any other municipal agency, Moore said interest is growing in



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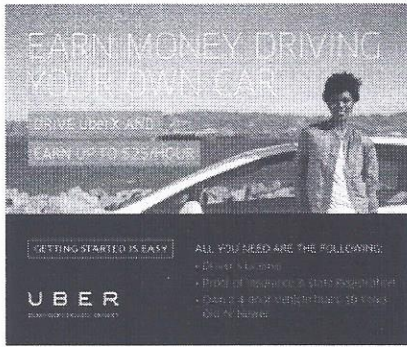
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- Consolidation is a bad idea
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the new engines, especially as gas prices continue to fluctuate.

Moore was showing off the technology along with other alternative energy industry representatives to people like Brunswick Mayor Cornell Harvey and officials from other Southeast Georgia municipalities.

"Alternative fuels are something we should take a look at. It's the way of the future," Harvey told a small group gathered for a panel discussion on alternative fuels.

After his introduction, Harvey told The News he attended because he is hoping to start a regular vehicle replacement program in the city instead of just replacing older vehicles as they begin to break down.

"This is a good time to consider alternative fuel vehicles," Harvey said. "I'm always looking for something to make Brunswick better and more efficient."

Although no concrete plans are in the works, the long term savings from having vehicles that do not rely solely on the constant roller coaster gas prices could help the city budget immensely, Harvey said.

But to get there, he said the city and county may have to get together to work on installing some infrastructure both can use.

It's the infrastructure Public Service Commissioner Tim Echols has been pushing since he took office on the regulatory board. The alternative fuel roadshow is part of that campaign.

As more areas like Metro Atlanta beef up infrastructure requirements for alternative fuel vehicles, Echols hopes other areas will follow.

Coastal Georgia is a perfect place for such vehicles to thrive, he added.

Places like St. Simons Island offer a perfect example. If electric car charging stations were properly placed, many people would use them, Echols said.

"We have just been educating people to get them to consider this," said Echols, whose family of seven children owns three electric cars.

For municipalities and businesses that own fleets of vehicles, the benefits of alternative fuel vehicles is great, Echols said.

"You don't need to replace all your vehicles. Just consider a couple," Echols said. "I really think people haven't thought about how easy it is."

Reporter Michael Hall writes about public safety, environment and other local topics. Contact him at mhall@thebrunswicknews.com or at 265-8320, ext. 320.

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June 2015

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