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FUEL OIL NEWS

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Serving The Deliverable Fuels Industry

Alison Sander,
co-founder of
AltWheels, with a
dual-hose fleet propane
refueler that was on display
at the 2016 AltWheels
Fleet Day.

ALTWHEELS HIGHLIGHT:

Marketing propane as a motor fuel



Proulx Oil & Propane has converted a number of vehicles to propane-gasoline, including a crane truck, box trucks and Ford pickup trucks that are F350 or F450 models. For oil delivery, the purchase of a Freightliner S2G, with a factory installed propane autogas engine and fuel system, “is on the horizon,” Proulx says.

There is an efficiency difference to account for, with converted vehicles getting about 90% of fuel mileage per gasoline-gallon equivalent, Proulx notes. For example, a Ford F150 getting 15 mpg with gasoline averages an equivalent of 13.5 mpg once it is converted, he says. The overall lower fuel costs incurred by converted vehicles enable a fleet operator to recover conversion costs and to go on realizing fuel savings, Proulx says.

Converting a vehicle to the Prins alternative fuel system marketed by Alliance Autogas, Swannanoa, N.C., costs approximately \$7,200 for an “average vehicle,” including hardware and a propane storage tank, Proulx says.

Refueling stations can be placed where needed and as for out-of-area refueling-networks there is a competitive market in which numerous propane fuel providers bid to be suppliers, Proulx says.

A fleet can train existing fleet mechanics to convert and maintain its vehicles, and there is an expanding base of independent businesses that do the work as well, he says.

Alliance Autogas specializes in helping fleets convert their vehicles, Proulx adds.

Environmentally, converted vehicles provide reductions in carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and a slight reduction in NOx, Proulx says.

AltWheels Fleet Day is an annual meeting of corporate and municipal fleet managers, focusing on fleet transportation technologies, alternative fuels and fleet management practices. This year’s annual Fleet Day, the eleventh, was held Sept. 19 at the Four Points by Sheraton hotel and conference center in Norwood, and it included an outdoor vehicle display.

The day includes panels. This year’s keynote speaker was Margo Oge, who played a leading role in the EPA’s efforts to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. | **FON**

AltWheels Highlight

Propane As a Motor Fuel

Jim Proulx has his sights set on the propane market. Propane as a motor fuel, that is. The market is in its infancy, but it has big potential, Proulx says.

The president of Proulx Oil & Propane, Newmarket, N.H., gave a talk on the future of the market at the AltWheels conference in Norwood, Mass.

A propane marketer might target a fleet with 25 conventionally-fueled vehicles, but the marketer doesn’t need to persuade the fleet operator to convert all 25 vehicles, Proulx

noted in a phone interview after the AltWheels event. The aim can be to persuade the fleet operator to convert 10% or 25% to 35% of the fleet initially. “Once the operator sees that the actual savings match the predicted savings,” the operator becomes more inclined to convert more

vehicles, Proulx says.

In his own company fleet, Proulx says, he has converted a number of vehicles to propane-gasoline, including a crane truck, box trucks and Ford pickup trucks that are F350 or F450 models. The company does not have a fuel oil delivery truck running on propane-gasoline, he says, though the purchase of a Freightliner S2G, with a factory installed propane autogas engine and fuel system, “is on the horizon,” he says.

Using converted vehicles is part and parcel of persuading other fleet operators to convert their vehicles, Proulx says. “We need to be using the product to sell the product,” he says. “It is very important that oil and propane companies use and understand what they are selling,” he says.

Current markets for propane as a motor fuel include municipal fleet vehicles such as those used for code enforcement, and town management staff vehicles. Some law enforcement vehicles that rack up high mileage are propane-fueled, Proulx says, as are some state fleets such as highway repair/support vehicles. The same goes for taxi fleets and transportation companies, which are known for high annual mileage and fuel consumption, and landscaping operations that use propane-fueled mowers.

Diesel-fueled vehicles can be converted to dual-fuel, the fuels being gasoline and propane, Proulx says. Converted engines start on gasoline and thereafter switch seamlessly between the two fuels, resulting in increased range between refuelings, he says.

As for the difference in fuel cost, Proulx said at the time of his talk that gasoline in his operating area was \$2.245/gallon with all taxes included; propane was at \$1.259/gallon with all taxes and rebates, including federal tax incentives that remain after numerous retroactive extensions.

BY STEPHEN BENNETT