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Nation's First "Biofuels Corridor" Opens

E85 and Biodiesel Available to Consumers along I-65

Alabama – As relations in the Middle East tighten and gasoline prices strain family budgets, the United States takes a giant leap toward reducing our dependence on foreign oil. This leap is provided by the greater availability of clean renewable alternative fuels for consumers through the opening of the nation's first biofuels corridor known as the I-65 Clean Corridor.

The Interstate 65 "Clean Corridor" opened with the beginning of a three day drive fueled entirely on biofuels such as E85 ethanol and B20 biodiesel. Similar to the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, the I-65 Clean Corridor is transforming transportation in America. Today drivers from Indiana and Alabama embarked from corridor anchor stations in Gary, Indiana and Mobile, Alabama on a journey to meet in Southern Indiana to celebrate the corridors opening. Stops on the Alabama tour include Mobile, Prattville, Birmingham, and Athens.

"Increasing the availability of biofuels is the right thing to do for our environment, our economy and our national security," said Gov. Bob Riley. "Biofuels burn cleaner, are good for agriculture because they are made from crops grown by our farmers, and reduce our dependence on imported oil, so we rely less on countries that do not have America's best interests at heart."

The I-65 Clean Corridor is a four state project involving cooperation among Federal and State agencies, multiple organizations, and private businesses to complete. Funded through grants originating from the Department of Energy, the Clean Corridor allows consumers to drive the entire 886 miles of I-65 never farther than ¼ of a tank of fuel away from an E85 or B20 pump.

The corridor opening comes less than 12 months from the day Gov. Riley announced grants provided through the Energy Division at the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, known as ADECA.

"By opening the I-65 Clean Corridor, our state takes an important step toward wider commercial availability of biofuels," said Bill Johnson, ADECA director. "We have made the promotion of alternative fuels a priority at ADECA because we believe Alabama has the potential to become a leader in the biofuels industry."

The I-65 Clean Corridor drive coincides with 2008 Odyssey Day coordinated by the National Alternative Fuels Training Consortium (NAFTC) and conducted in partnership with the U. S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities program. A total of 86 Odyssey events are being conducted nationwide where Americans can learn about the benefits of Alternative Fuels and Alternative Fuel Vehicles.

"Indiana is proud to be a partner in this effort with Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, as well as our friends in Kentucky and Tennessee" Said Eric Burch, Communications Director with the Indiana Office of Energy and Defense Development. "Bringing E85 and B20 pumps to drivers the entire length of I-65 not only promotes the use of cleaner fuels, but takes us closer to the goal of energy independence in the United States."

Funds were provided to the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, a nonprofit organization based in Birmingham that works to make alternative fuels more available for transportation uses. The Coalition and ADECA then solicited applications from private businesses to install the necessary infrastructure to develop the corridor.

"With the development of this network of E85-ethanol fueling stations along Interstate-65, American consumers will be able to drive from the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast without ever having to use regular petroleum gasoline. However, this incredible achievement would not have been possible without the partnership and cooperation between DOE's Clean Cities coalitions, various state agencies, federal officials, businesses and local stakeholders. The ability that these diverse Clean Cities partnerships have to combine resources and effectively work together is their greatest strength," said John Mizroch, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, U.S. Department of Energy.

Station owners were given the option to receive up to \$20,000 to help with the installation of B20 Biodiesel pumps and tanks, \$20,000 for installing E85 ethanol infrastructure, or \$50,000 for the installation of both biofuels.

According to statements in the *Wall Street Journal* last March, gasoline prices would be 15% higher without biofuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. Continuing to replace a portion of the demand for gasoline with biofuels reduces pricing pressures and could continue to lower retail prices for fuel at the pump.

Typically, a gallon of E85 ethanol is cheaper than a gallon of gasoline. The lower price of ethanol accommodates any expected loss in gas mileage. E85 costs are dictated by their proximity to an ethanol production facility. The nearer a station is to a plant, the cheaper the price tends to be. With the recent opening of a cellulosic ethanol production demonstration facility in Livingston, Mobile and other Alabama E85 stations could potentially see lower E85 prices in the future.

“Sort of like the chicken and egg, we often get asked which needs to come first to increase the use of E85—more E85 infrastructure or more flex-fuel vehicles (FFV),” said Mark Bentley, Executive Director of the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition. “We think they are walking hand-in-hand. Automotive makers are providing more flex-fuel vehicle options; consumers are buying more of these vehicles; at the same time, we have more production facilities and stations opening. Regardless of where it begins, the results are the same: less dependence on oil, more local jobs, and a cleaner environment.”

The use of biodiesel and ethanol in place of gasoline has proven benefits for the environment. A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency study from January showed that ethanol made from switchgrass lowered dangerous emissions by over 94 percent. The report is positive news for the alternative fuel source currently being researched by Auburn University.

Alabama Clean Corridor stations are currently open to the public in Mobile and Birmingham with stations in Flomaton, Montgomery, Prattville, Warrior and Athens opening by the end of the year.

For more information about this and future Alabama Clean Corridors, contact Mark Bentley with the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition at 205-402-2755, or log on to the website at www.alabamacleancorridors.com.

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