PG&E charged up over all-electric truck test

By Bruce Spence - Record Staff Writer
Stockton Record, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

Four all-electric sport utility trucks will be tested by Pacific Gas and Electric across its 70,000-square-mile service area in central and northern California.

The vehicles, which operate via lithium titanate oxide batteries, are produced by Phoenix Motorcars. The Ontario-based company's initial focus is on fleet sales of full-function, freeway-speed, "green" electric trucks to companies, organizations and agencies in California.

The trucks will each have a driving range of 130 miles, can be recharged in 10 minutes and cruise at freeway speeds while carrying five passengers and a full payload.

Electrifying

• Phoenix Motorcars says its sport utility trucks have zero emissions and can reach a top speed of 95 miles per hour.

• The company is working on an expansion battery pack that will extend the range to 250 miles, available later this year.

• The vehicles charge by plugging into a 220-volt outlet, the same as an electric dryer outlet in your home.

• They also come with air conditioning, heating, and power windows and locks.

• Retail price tag: $45,000.

• More information on Phoenix Motorcars can be found at www.phoenixmotorcars.com.

"PG&E is firmly committed to reducing our carbon foot print by using innovative alternative-fuel technologies," said Bob Howard, PG&E vice president of gas transmission and distribution.

The utility already owns and operates hybrid and fuel-cell vehicles, as well as more than 1,100 natural-gas vehicles, the largest fleet of that kind in the United States.

PG&E's clean-fuel fleet consists of service and crew trucks, meter-reader vehicles and pool cars that run either entirely on compressed natural gas or have bi-fuel capabilities.

Phoenix Motorcars, launched in July 2001, estimates a sales production of 500 vehicles this year and 6,000 vehicles for 2008. The company plans to release a limited number of vehicles to consumers later this year, with full release scheduled for next year.

Dennis Hogan, Phoenix Motorcars chief financial officer, said PG&E bought the trucks at a retail cost of $45,000 each, intending to buy more if the vehicles perform well.

Delivery of the first vehicle will begin in June, with PG&E being among the first to receive the Phoenix trucks, he said.

There have been letters of intent signed for 400 of the 500 vehicles that will be produced and delivered this year, he said.

That includes municipalities, ports and even a Bay Area taxi company interested in buying 30 of them, he said.

Solano County landfill expansion rejected by judge

By Mike Taugher
Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2007

Plans to expand a Solano County landfill that accepts about half of Contra Costa's garbage were dealt a blow this week when a judge said environmental concerns were not adequately considered.

The Potrero Hills Landfill, which sits just above environmentally sensitive wetlands in Suisun Marsh, is expected to close in about five years unless it gets approval to expand. The planned expansion would quadruple the size of the landfill and extend its life by about 35 years.

For Contra Costa residents, the fate of Potrero Hills landfill could be important because for years it has served as a low-cost disposal site for about one-fourth of the county's trash. When a major landfill in Richmond closed last fall, the garbage that used to go that landfill also shifted to Solano County, meaning half of all Contra Costa's garbage goes across the county border to Potrero Hills.

If the landfill closes, it could force trash collection agencies to find other disposal or recycling options that could lead to higher rates.

Environmentalists oppose the expansion because the landfill sits just above Suisun Marsh, the site of some of the state's most important wetlands and a breeding and feeding ground for many species of fish and birds.

Since 2002, Potrero Hills has been cited 11 times by regulators for violations ranging from blowing litter to accepting too much garbage.

Other environmentalists are opposed because they say the low cost of disposing trash there discourages recycling.

The ruling, issued Monday by Solano County Superior Court Judge Paul L. Beeman, found that the environmental impact report done for the expansion project fell short in three ways.

The analysis failed to back up its claims that air pollution would be adequately offset and that neighbors' water wells would not be drawn down.

More importantly, however, the court found that landfill owner Republic Services Inc. should also consider options that would move the landfill away from the environmentally sensitive marsh, and perhaps out of Solano County.

The court's ruling is the latest setback for Republic Services, which had sought state agency approval late last year but has run into numerous questions from a skeptical San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. A hearing before the state commission was originally scheduled in January but has been pushed back to May or June. This week's court action could further delay the permit hearing.

A spokeswoman for Republic Services said the company was confident it could address the deficiencies cited by the judge and continue pursuing its expansion plans.

"These are three areas we believe we can fix. We're actually pleased with the court's ruling," spokeswoman Sue Vaccaro said.

"It's a setback, but it's not a disaster" for Republic Services, said David Tam, one of 11 directors of the Northern California Recycling Association, which brought the lawsuit with other environmentalists and residents.

'Green' goes mainstream

Consumers have more choices than ever when it comes to buying an economical car. Here are some of the models given a superior rating by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

Born in picturesque Montana and an early member of Sierra Club -- "when it was a radical thing to do" -- Judy Fair-Spaulding has always had a green mentality.

The 66-year-old Ridgecrest resident has held true to her beliefs. Today, she recycles, she conserves water and she's among a growing number of local consumers who has opted for an environmentally friendly vehicle. She recently purchased the Toyota Yaris, named one of the Greenest Vehicles of 2007 by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

"I'm always trying to conserve, especially gasoline," she said.

Her attitude toward the environment has persisted for many years, even in her divorce.

It was the 1960s and the couple appeared before a conservative judge who asked her why she wanted to end the marriage. Fair-Spaulding said her husband didn't respect her intelligence and cited a recent argument the two had in which she opposed building dams in the Grand Canyon. The divorce was granted.

When it comes to cars, more buyers like Fair-Spaulding are getting the green-car bug.

"I think there's a conscientious decision being made, especially by the baby boomers, to buy a hybrid because it's the right things to do," said John Pitre, general manager of Motor City Buick, Pontiac, GMC, Saturn and Lexus.

Hybrid vehicles now account for about 10 percent of sales at the Bakersfield auto center, which offers hybrids in models ranging from full-size pickups and SUVs to luxury sedans.

The local buying frenzy, which began to pick up when gas prices spiked a year ago, isn't expected to end soon. Pitre predicts sales of hybrids to double or triple in the next several years.

"It's a pretty exciting time to be in the auto industry, frankly, because I think hybrids will direct the industry for the next 10 years," he said.

Hybrids are also selling well at Bill Wright Toyota, which offers the Prius, the Highlander and Camry as hybrids and will soon start selling a hybrid Avalon.

"A few months ago, we couldn't keep a hybrid on the lot," said Larry Zavolosieck, a sales associate for the dealership, who also sees the vehicle's popularity increasing as the technology and fuel economy improve. "It's like a snowball going downhill, there's no stopping it."

For 21-year-old Crystal Jones, the decision to buy her ultra fuel-efficient Yaris was as much about helping herself as protecting the environment.

The price was good -- around $12,000 -- and the vehicle gets nearly 40 miles to the gallon on the highway, she said. But Jones, who grew up in Bakersfield, is asthmatic and driving a cleaner, more fuel-efficient car makes her feel better about what she's putting into the environment and how that impacts her own health, as well as others.

"You want the place you live to be clean," she said.

UCI pumps out hydrogen fuel

Station delivers more pressure than others, increasing vehicle range.

By Jorge Barrientos,
Orange County Register, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

IRVINE -- It looks like a regular corner gas station, but don't be fooled -- what's being pumped through the nozzles isn't a smelly liquid.

UC Irvine celebrated the grand opening Tuesday of its upgraded automobile hydrogen fueling station on campus -- one of less than two dozen stations in California accessible to the public. The station is capable of pumping double the hydrogen pressure than any other in the state, said Ed Heydorn, business development manager at Air Products and Chemicals, Inc., a company that helped design and install the station.

The station, on the corner of Jamboree Road and Campus Drive, is the first in California to deliver hydrogen at 700 bar, or 10,000 pounds of pressure per square inch, which could potentially double a vehicle's driving range. UCI has had the ability to dispense hydrogen at a campus station since 2003, but only at 350 bar.

Hydrogen fuel cell cars use hydrogen to power electric motors, make almost no noise and emit nearly no pollution. Mass production is expected to begin in 2010.

There are only 23 hydrogen stations in the state, and 167 fuel cell vehicles, according to the California Fuel Cell Partnerships.

Government, university and fuel cell industry officials were on hand Tuesday for a demonstration.

The fuel cost translates to about $5 per gallon, said Air Products' Steven Hoffman as he was pumping hydrogen into a Nissan X-Trail. Each hydrogen gallon provides nearly double the miles per gallon than its gas-guzzling counterparts. An average tank of hydrogen allows no more than 200 miles.

Santa Ana Mayor Miguel Pulido, for example, said he gets about 80 miles per gallon on his hydrogen vehicle. Santa Ana also has a fueling station.

Hydrogen fuel stations will be a common thing 40 years from now, said Scott Samuelsen, director of UCI's National Fuel Cell Research Center.

State gas prices zooming near $3

By Dale Kasler - Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

California's gasoline market is so fragile that a fire at an oil refinery in the Texas Panhandle could help boost prices above $3 a gallon.

The average statewide price shot past $2.80 this week, the result of rising consumption, a fresh surge in crude oil costs and a host of planned and unplanned refinery outages, including the fire in Texas. Prices have risen 31 cents in the past month -- and are nearly 50 cents higher than the rest of the country, AAA says.

San Francisco's average price hit $3.01 a gallon Tuesday, the highest of any major market in the state, and analyst Denton Cinquegrana said the rest of California could hit $3 before long. Consultant David Hackett of Stillwater Associates in Irvine said he thinks prices will go up another 5 cents or so.

Cinquegrana said Californians are unlikely to repeat the roller-coaster experience of last year, when prices hit a record $3.38 in May and then tumbled nearly $1 in the next five months.

But California's supply situation remains delicate and subject to volatility. Analysts said gas production has been hurt by a January fire at Chevron Corp.'s Richmond refinery and a glitch last week at Exxon Mobil Corp.'s Torrance plant.

At the same time, California refiners have been wrapping up planned maintenance projects and going through the annual late winter conversion to summertime fuel blends, which are tougher and costlier to make. That puts an added squeeze on production.

Add to this two factors that lead to higher prices, in California and across the country:

• The price of crude oil has risen about $10 a barrel in the past six weeks. Oil futures closed at $61.46 a barrel, up 7 cents, on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Each $1 increase generally means a 2.4 cents-a-gallon increase at retail.

• Motorists themselves are putting more upward pressure on prices. For the four weeks ending Feb. 16, gas and diesel consumption was up nearly 4 percent from a year ago, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

"Demand has been relentless in the U.S. as a whole," said Cinquegrana, markets editor at the Oil Price Information Service in New Jersey.

Yet California prices have risen more quickly than in the rest of the country. The traditional "spread" of 20 cents to 30 cents, caused in part by California's tougher fuel specifications, has grown to a whopping 46 cents.

One consumer advocacy group, Santa Monica's Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights, called this week for "immediate action by Congress and California lawmakers to regulate gasoline supplies and curb price-gouging by oil companies and refiners."

The foundation added, "If oil companies won't increase their refinery capacity and gasoline storage in the state, government must do it."

But industry spokesmen said California's high prices are the result of legitimate supply constraints that can't be easily remedied.

California's unusually tough, hard-to-duplicate fuel formula, designed to reduce air pollution, make it difficult to find replacement supplies when one of the state's 14 refineries suffers a problem, they say. And government red tape has hindered efforts to increase refining capacity in the state, said Joe Sparano, president of Sacramento-based Western States Petroleum Association.

The Feb. 16 fire at Valero Energy Corp.'s refinery in Sunray, Texas, is one of the most vivid examples of how wildly California prices can fluctuate.

California gets no gas from Sunray, yet prices have risen faster than in Texas. The reason: Phoenix relies heavily on the Sunray plant. With that supply cut, Phoenix turned to refiners in Southern California for backup, said Hackett of Stillwater Associates.

"An outage in west Texas can indeed affect California's supply-demand balance," Sparano said. "It's a real-world occurrence."

Valero said Tuesday the refinery could resume "partial plant operations by early April."

The rise in gas prices comes as figures released this week showed that the U.S. demand for fuel-efficient hybrid vehicles started to slow last year.

According to data compiled by R.L. Polk & Co., 254,545 gas-electric hybrids were sold last year, a 28 percent increase. That was the second lowest percent increase since 2000.

One reason for the slowdown was the reduction in tax credits on some models. In addition, carmakers "still have obstacles to overcome to prove the merit of owning a hybrid, including educating customers about developing hybrid technology; debunking the myth that hybrids are only needed when gas prices rise and general apathy or risk-averse attitudes toward the relatively new-to-market technology," Polk analyst Lonnie Miller said in a press release.

Californians bought 26.5 percent of all hybrids, far more than any other state, the Polk study said.

Politicians' flights called wasteful

Schwarzenegger and Feinstein preach energy efficiency but often fly fuel-gulping small jets.

By Paul Pringle, Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

Sen. Dianne Feinstein offers plenty of tips on how California households can combat global warming, such as carpooling and running only a full dishwasher.

But one bit of information Feinstein declines to share is the number of times that she flew last year on her husband's Gulfstream jet, which burns much more fuel per passenger-mile than commercial airliners.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger also has asked constituents to do their part to conserve energy -- including cutting summertime power consumption -- even though he takes to the skies on leased executive jets.

Aides say there is nothing contradictory between the pro-green pronouncements and the flying habits of the Democratic senator and Republican governor.

Some environmentalists aren't so sure.

"There appears to be a discrepancy between calling on people to make personal reductions and using a private jet that exacerbates the problem," Clean Air Watch President Frank O'Donnell said.

Flying on a Gulfstream rather than an airliner is like driving a sport utility vehicle instead of riding a bus, O'Donnell and others say.

A single cross-country round trip on a Gulfstream IV, or GIV, the model owned by Feinstein's husband, churns out about 83,000 to 90,000 pounds of carbon dioxide, experts say. By contrast, on a per capita basis, the average American produces 50,000 pounds from all activities in an entire year.

Nonetheless, Feinstein and Schwarzenegger intend to continue their noncommercial flying ways because their jobs demand a flexibility the airlines can't match, spokesmen say.

Schwarzenegger's office said he and a jet-leasing company are establishing a "carbon offset" program for the governor and fellow customers, retroactive to Jan. 1. Carbon offsets are bought from organizations that plant trees and support renewable energy enterprises, among other measures, to offset greenhouse gases produced by the buyers.

"This is big news," Schwarzenegger spokesman Bill Maile said of the governor's undertaking with NetJets, the leasing firm.

Feinstein, however, got the jump on Schwarzenegger. She began buying carbon offsets last year to partially cover the travel on the GIV, and will purchase enough offsets this year to compensate for all the trips, spokesman Scott Gerber said.

He added that Feinstein took "numerous" commercial flights in 2006, but flew mostly on the GIV. He balked at disclosing the tally of her Gulfstream journeys.

"We're not going to get into specifics," he said.

Noncommercial aircraft and other carbon-related indulgences have caused politicians considerable turbulence recently.

A conservative group has condemned Al Gore for racking up an average monthly electricity bill of $1,200 at his Nashville mansion last year while championing the anti-global warming cause. A Gore spokeswoman said the former vice president invests in renewable energy to offset his electricity use.

As part of an ethics push, the House and Senate are toughening restrictions on lawmakers who fly private jets, though exceptions for members and spouses who own planes are under consideration.

Earlier this month, Republicans accused House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of requesting a large military jet to fly her and family members between the capital and her San Francisco district.

Security protocols grant Pelosi occasional military flights because she is second in line to the presidency. Her office said she had only inquired about an aircraft with enough fuel capacity to make the trip nonstop, and would fly commercial if necessary.

Pelosi flew on private jets seven times in 2006, her spokesman said. "She made every effort to travel commercially whenever possible," Drew Hammill said.

Sen. Barbara Boxer says she took four trips on private aircraft last year, one with multiple stops over 2 1/2 days.

"If you can take a commercial plane to get where you need to go at the time you need to be there, you should do it," she said in an e-mail. "If not, you have to look at alternatives such as trains, fuel-efficient vehicles, buses, and in some cases, private planes."

For that last option, Feinstein reimburses her husband, Richard Blum, for use of the jet, Gerber said. Blum bought the GIV for about $23 million in 1999. The reimbursements are based on a first-class commercial fare, with more than 90% of the money coming from Feinstein's personal funds and the rest from campaign coffers, the spokesman said. Last year, the reimbursements to Blum totaled about $73,000, he said.

But a GIV's operating expenses are much higher than a first-class booking. A round-trip Los Angeles-Washington flight on the Gulfstream burns about 4,500 to 5,000 gallons of fuel at a cost of roughly $20,000, depending on local pump prices, said Jeff Beck, a veteran corporate pilot. And that doesn't include pilot fees, maintenance and parking bills.

"It's the least environmental thing that politicians can do," Beck said. He said Gulfstreams devour so much fossil fuel per passenger that "it's like they're throwing dinosaur bones out of the tailpipe."

A coast-to-coast, first-class ticket on a major airline goes for about $1,200 to $2,500, round trip, according to a sampling of three airlines' prices Tuesday.

A Boeing 767-200 airliner burns about 1,550 gallons an hour -- three times as much as a GIV. But the larger plane typically can seat about 180 passengers, as opposed to a GIV's 12 to 14.

Eric Carlson, executive director of Carbonfund.org, a nonprofit that sells offsets, said it would charge $229 to cover the emissions from the GIV round trip.

Schwarzenegger flies a variety of leased jets, which cost his campaign $733,000 during the three months ending last September. Maile said the governor digs into his own pockets for some flights.

He also said Schwarzenegger has converted one of his Hummers to biodiesel fuel, and plans to install solar panels on his house. His other three Hummers remain gas hogs.

For her part, Feinstein drives a hybrid Lexus sport utility vehicle when she is home in San Francisco, Gerber said. But she drives a Lincoln Town Car in Washington.

Not that the eco-crowd is eager to criticize Feinstein and Schwarzenegger, who are generally viewed as key supporters of the growing movement to curb emissions.

Representatives of some environmental groups either would not comment on the two politicians' penchant for private jets, or suggested that allowances could be made in their circumstances.

"Given the exigencies of the campaign trail, if not the demands of governing of a large state, it may not be realistic to expect elective officials to fly commercial all the time," said Jon Coifman, spokesman for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

But O'Donnell, of Clean Air Watch, invoked a loftier ideal:

"It is fair to hope that our political leaders will lead by example."

Dramatic steps urged to curb climate change

Scientific team looks to limit warming to 3.6 degrees or less

Robert Lee Hotz
Los Angeles Times, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

United Nations -- Wrenching worldwide climate changes can no longer be avoided, but there is still time to stave off the worst consequences of global warming, an international research team said Tuesday.

The scientists from 11 countries urged sweeping conservation measures to hold the expected increase in temperatures to no more than an average of 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit globally -- less than half the expected increase if emissions of greenhouse gas and soot continue unabated.

Based on two years of study, the scientists called for dramatic actions ranging from carbon taxes and a ban on conventional coal-fired power plants to an end to all beachfront construction worldwide.

The researchers were funded by the nonprofit U.N. Foundation and the 60,000-member research society Sigma Xi.

"Unlike many reports from scientists, this report gives very clear recommendations for what the international community and nations themselves must do to mitigate and adapt to climate change," said biodiversity expert Peter Raven, director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, who helped prepare the Sigma Xi report.

With its emphasis on policy recommendations, the panel's effort marks a shift in the international politics of pollution and climate change, analysts said. Researchers are no longer debating whether human-induced global warming is genuine, but have begun the painstaking process of negotiating international agreement on what to do about it.

Their effort comes on the heels of a landmark U.N. report last month that concluded rising temperatures would continue to increase even if greenhouse gas emissions could be held to current levels.

Global temperatures already have increased about 1.4 degrees over pre-industrial levels, the researchers reported. To meet the scientists' goal, global carbon dioxide emissions must level off by 2015 and then drop by two-thirds of that level by 2100.

They urged stricter fuel-efficiency standards, as well as fuel taxes, registration fees and rebates that favor more efficient transportation, which today is responsible for 40 percent of the world's carbon emissions. A twentyfold improvement in car efficiency is well within existing technology, they said. Moving freight by rail instead of truck could also cut emissions substantially

The researchers also recommended expanded use of biofuels to reduce dependence on the oil that accounts for one-quarter of the world's carbon emissions. They endorsed broader use of nuclear power, if it can be made safer. Energy research budgets worldwide ought to triple, they said.

In addition, the scientists called for improved designs of energy-efficient appliances, office equipment and greener commercial and residential buildings. Taken together, heating, cooling and lighting buildings accounts for almost 30 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

Most tellingly, the panel also called for a ban on any new coal-fired power plants that cannot be equipped to capture and store the carbon dioxide they emit.

All told, the United States, China and India currently plan to build nearly 850 new coal-fired plants over the next decade, which by environmentalists' calculations would pump up to five times more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than current international control measures aim to eliminate.

No matter what people do to reduce soot or curtail emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, the world will continue to warm somewhat and people will have to adapt, the researchers said.

To minimize the hazards of rising sea levels and more powerful storms, the group called for a worldwide ban on coastal construction near existing high-tide lines. To reduce the effects of climate-related disasters, such as floods or prolonged droughts, the panel urged better international emergency response measures, warning that there may be as many as 50 million environmental refugees by 2010.

Chattanooga puts best losing face on Toyota choice

Bill Poovey, Associated Press
Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. - Tennessee's top industry recruiter and officials in Chattanooga put the best face on losing out to Tupelo, Miss., as the site for a Toyota assembly plant in a failed team effort with Georgia and Alabama.

"Finishing second is not bad," Chattanooga Mayor Ron Littlefield said Tuesday.

"The important thing is the forward momentum has not stopped and will not stop," the mayor said.

Littlefield, Hamilton County Mayor Claude Ramsey and Matt Kisber, Tennessee's commissioner of economic and community development, spoke at a downtown news conference the day the Japanese automaker announced its site selection.

Kisber, who was informed one day earlier by Toyota executives that they had picked Tupelo, said Gov. Phil Bredesen made numerous trips and attended meetings with Toyota officials in leading an all-out effort.

"I feel strongly and Gov. Bredesen feels strongly that we have here in Chattanooga the premiere site in the Southeast," Kisber said. "We are going to redouble our efforts ... we are going to be back someday I hope in the not too distant future to celebrate a different outcome for Enterprise South."

Officials in Chattanooga were pushing the 1,600-acre Enterprise South site, part of a former Army TNT plant complex that environmental officials describe as cleaned to a "residential standard."

Bredesen, who was out of the state Tuesday, issued a statement saying he was disappointed by Toyota's decision but adding "the close proximity of the site to Tennessee has the potential to positively impact Tennesseans and the hundreds of automotive suppliers who already call our state home."

Kisber said the Georgia and Alabama governors and U.S. senators had either spoken to Toyota executives or sent letters supporting Chattanooga because it's near those states.

"We knew it was important because of Chattanooga's location to show a true regional effort," Kisber said. He said that "regional partnership" would continue to be used as a drawing card for future prospects.

Ramsey said the community "is positioned now to continue that effort to attract large industry. Enterprise South has small sites. It has medium-size sites and it has a megasite. That is something we haven't had for years."

Kisber described as inaccurate some media reports that Toyota concerns about environmental factors such as air quality were the reason Chattanooga was not selected.

"The environmental issues in Chattanooga did not exist," Kisber said. "They did say this site and the city and state met every criteria Toyota has."

Kisber said Toyota executives agreed to discuss their decision-making process with him in coming weeks. He discounted politics as a factor and said it was apparently due to Toyota's "operating strategy."

He said Toyota did not give him a reason for selecting Tupelo over Chattanooga and the other finalist, Marion, Ark.

"Elvis' birthplace," Ramsey said, prompting laughter by the dozens of chamber of commerce members at the news conference.

In Washington, Jim Press, president of Toyota North America Inc., said the incentive package from Mississippi was worth $296 million, less than what Nissan received from that state. Press declined to describe the incentive packages accompanying the Tennessee and Arkansas sites.

"It wasn't a competition for incentive packages and the size of the packages. The packages were all somewhat similar in their impact but that really wasn't a factor in our decision," Press said.

He also said air quality issues did not affect the Tennessee and Arkansas sites.

"We were able to clear all of the goals in terms of environmental impact," Press said. "The site in Tennessee, environmentally, was fine. Again, it was very desirable and had something not gone together with Mississippi, then either of those two would have been great alternatives."

He said some factors in the site choice are "subjective, not objective: the workforce, the people, the engagement of the local authorities in terms of bringing together the infrastructure, the site itself, the inbound and outbound logistics, the training, the level of the existing work force, the availability of labor, a lot of those factors really have to go into this."

Sacramento Bee, Editorial, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

Editorial: Good job, Tex

Texas utility backs away from dirty coal

Even by standards of the Lone Star State, the announcement last year that a Texas utility planned to build 11 coal-fired power plants was breathtaking in its largeness. The TXU Corp., with the blessing and encouragement of Texas Gov. Rick Perry, said it wanted to build the 11 plants by 2011 to create 9,100 megawatts of electricity and haul in a reported $1 billion in extra profits each year.

There was only one problem: If built, those 11 plants would have added to Texas' air pollution problems and spewed an extra 78 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. That tonnage would have dwarfed the greenhouse gases California plans to eliminate by 2011, and it would have made Texas, with its oil refineries and lax environmental laws, a national pariah in the fight against global warming.

With Perry issuing an order to speed up the permitting of power plants, TXU seemed to face no roadblocks.

Then everything changed. Environmentalists protested. So did national investor groups, Dallas' mayor and Southern Baptists. In September, California passed laws to fight global warming and block coal power from being imported into the state. In November, the Democrats took control of Congress. Two months later, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its strongest report yet detailing the threats and causes of global warming.

On Sunday, all of those events culminated in the decision by TXU to abandon eight of the 11 coal-fired power plants as part of a $45 billion buyout by a team of private equity investors. TXU's new owners still plan to build three of the plants, but they have committed to reducing the utility's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 by investing more in wind power and energy efficiency.

While it might take some time to see if TXU meets its new commitments, the announced sale of the company has jolted the energy industry. Stock prices for Peabody Energy and Arch Coal -- two companies expected to provide coal for the Texas plants -- dropped sharply Monday. In their strongest terms yet, public interest groups have sent a message that investments in dirty energy are not only irresponsible, they carry a huge financial risk.

This message needs to resonate here in California. Despite its support for conservation and alternative energies, the state -- largely because of its municipal power agencies -- still imports about 20 percent of its electricity from coal-fired plants.

There may come a day when coal power can improve its image by sequestering carbon dioxide and eliminating mercury and other air pollutants. That day has not yet come. Until it does, everyone who has a stake in power generation needs to look to alternatives and not repeat the mistakes of the Lone Star State.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses two new projects in California. The first project is the unveiling of an automobile hydrogen fueling station at UC Irvine. The second project was the Green Locomotive Technology Tour, which featured current and experimental technologies to reduce locomotive emissions. For more information, contact Maricela at (559) 230-5849.

Presentan nuevos proyectos de locomotoras y para autos sin contaminación en California

La Universidad de California presentó en Irvine la primera estación de suministro de hidrógeno para automóviles en la que los conductores pueden regular la presión de su abastecimiento, como parte de un proyecto estatal de "autopistas de hidrógeno"

Noticiero Latino, Fresno, CA
Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2007

Académicos y empresarios presentaron en California en sólo 24 horas dos nuevos proyectos tecnológicos separados para transporte sin contaminación o con emisiones notablemente reducidas.

La Universidad de California presentó en Irvine la primera estación de suministro de hidrógeno para automóviles en la que los conductores pueden regular la presión de su abastecimiento, como parte de un proyecto estatal de "autopistas de hidrógeno".

La empresa Union Pacific demostró por su parte en recorrido por Los Ángeles, Fresno, Stockton y Oakland una nueva locomotora con tecnología que reduce consumo de millones de galones de diesel diarios para los trenes activos en California.