

Roth: Oklahoma can switch to AT&T's energy plan

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AT&T just announced that it added its 5,000th alternative-fuel vehicle to its massive corporate fleet. This announcement came as a part of AT&T's aggressive goal to have 15,000 of its 70,300 fleet vehicles it runs to be AFVs by 2018. As a part of that effort, AT&T has made a large commitment for its AFVs to be compressed natural gas vehicles.

Alternative-fuel vehicles are those that run on fuels other than petroleum or vehicles that have any technology that doesn't rely solely on it. AFVs are a market response to high oil prices that are leading consumers and manufacturers to look elsewhere for cleaner, cheaper, American solutions. Reducing America's consumption of oil is challenging because our economy is incredibly dependent on transportation. Seventy percent of all domestic oil use comes from transportation. By the way, most of that oil comes from abroad.

AT&T's plan – according to the center for Automotive Research – will save 49 million gallons of gasoline over its 10-year life and reduce carbon emissions by close to 211,000 metric tons. This is the equivalent of removing 36,000 passenger vehicles from the road in a year. Cheers to less traffic.

Last year, President Obama announced the National Clean Fleet Partnership managed by the Department of Energy. The focus is to reduce fuel use by utilizing more efficient vehicles and technologies and to replace conventional gasoline and diesel vehicles with advanced technologies or ones that use alternative fuels like electricity, natural gas, biodiesel, ethanol, hydrogen and propane. AT&T was among the five charter

members of this program, along with FedEx, PepsiCo, UPS and Verizon.

Oklahoma's policymakers have an opportunity to follow AT&T's lead. In 2011, the state used 11,092 vehicles in its fleet and less than 1 percent of those ran on CNG or were AFVs. According to Gov. Mary Fallin's energy plan, transitioning 500 of these state vehicles can save the state as much as \$500,000 in fuel costs annually. Our governor's leadership and her recent announcement to commit Oklahoma's future fleet purchases can pave the way for further market penetration of AFVs that not only would improve Oklahoma's economy by utilizing homegrown fuel sources, but also help clear the air. CNG burns much cleaner, producing 60 to 90 percent less smog-producing pollutants. AT&T is using 170 AFVs in Oklahoma, with 91 in Oklahoma City, 41 in Tulsa and the remainder throughout the state.

Last summer was one of Oklahoma's hottest. In fact, our smog was so bad that our state came very close to the Environmental Protection Agency's nonattainment standards for ozone. AT&T is leading the way, and so can Oklahoma: by making AFV vehicle purchase and conversions a viable and economically feasible alternative for the state and her citizens.

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