

# Roth: Empowering alternative fuels for your car

## THE JOURNAL RECORD

Last week, I wrote a column entitled, "Presidential politics and the price of gas." This week, I examine alternative fuels not normally found at the pump.

Alternative-fuel vehicles are those that run on nontraditional fuels. Simply stated, that means fuel that isn't refined from oil. Generally speaking, all of these alternative fuels face problems penetrating a market that is addicted to oil. Additionally, the infrastructure to support supplying these fuels to consumers is underdeveloped, but it is improving.

These alternative fuels are ethanol, biodiesel, natural gas, propane and hydrogen. Ethanol comes generally from corn and other crops. Biodiesel comes generally from vegetable oils and animal fats. Natural gas is a fossil fuel that is extracted from beneath the Earth's surface. Propane is similar to natural gas; it is a fossil fuel. Hydrogen is produced domestically from a wide variety of sources such as fossil fuels and renewable fuels.

All of these fuels have two common themes. They can be produced domestically, reducing our dependence on the world market, and have fewer emissions than gasoline. As a result, they burn cleaner.

One of the leading and emerging markets is the use of compressed natural gas in vehicles. With fueling stations popping up all over the state, the infrastructure for natural gas in vehicles is growing. And not just for passenger vehicles, but for light- and heavy-duty trucks, as well.

While there are some downsides to using natural gas in a vehicle, like fewer miles on a tank of fuel, the advantages are phenomenal. From a larger perspective, almost 87 percent of the natural gas used in the United States is produced in this country. That's dramatically different than crude oil and petroleum. And, it produces almost 90 percent less smog pollutants and 40 percent less greenhouse gas emissions. Bottom line: It's cheap.

The federal government offers tax incentives for the use of alternative fleet vehicles, and Oklahoma does, as well, for greater utilization of natural gas.

As we begin to feel it more and more at the pump, maybe instead of looking to the same fuel and saying the same things about a century-old problem, we should look elsewhere. There are plenty of good, American alternatives.

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