

Habits over Hype

The complexity of the energy business is habitually distilled down to familiar talking points. The analytical quality of the information is so manipulated that it is lost by the time it becomes this recognizable rhetoric. Habits over hype will attempt to clearly explain challenges while providing a different perspective.

Habits of Hybrids – The benefits of hybrids are usually touted and generally accepted as a step to a future of green mobility. The Argonne National Laboratory has developed a sophisticated model to address wells-to-wheels energy use for classes of cars. The hybrid is estimated to use 9.4% less energy than the traditional gasoline engine. 9.4% less gasoline consumption is significant number. If all gasoline consumption was reduced by that amount it would total nearly 800,000 barrels per day. Incidentally, 800 MBPD is virtually the same amount of gasoline and blending components imported into the US each day. Obviously a dramatic shift to hybrid technology would relax our dependence on foreign oil and be better for the environment. However, hybrid gasoline engines are a transitioning technology that come at a cost. Hybrids are more expensive to purchase and maintain. The gasoline savings will take several years to pay-out with gas at \$3/gal. The benefits of hybrids are the investment in the R&D technology, lowered the impact on the environment, and reduced dependence on foreign oil.

The topic of fuel economy is very complicated and is traditionally narrowed down to the engine technology. The big black bold numbers with EPA written on the window at the car lot is considered the fuel economy. That number is an approximation that is dependent on a many variables. Engine technology is significant when understanding fuel economy. However, other variables have considerable more impact, most notably driving habits. A change in driving habits will have substantially more impact on energy usage and environmental impact. Optimal fuel economy is dependent on speed. The Department of Energy suggest that fuel economy dramatically drops off above 60 mph. They say that high speeds can cause up to 23% more gasoline consumption. If we all look at our driving habits it is very reasonable to make greater than a 9% savings in the gasoline we consumer by driving closer to the optimal speed, reducing the weight, and ultimately making a point not to drive. Hybrids are a step to less dependence on oil and less environmental impact for those that have the luxury to invest in this technology. However changing why and how we drive can make the benefits than hybrid gasoline engines today.

Future

Habits over Horsepower – Americans obsession with Horsepower and its effect

Habits over Horticulture – Changing beliefs in bio-fuels to make a real difference

Habits over HVAC – Changing habits to use less energy for environmental conditioning