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Electrifying Nebraska's Daily Commuters

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Electrifying Nebraska's Daily Commuters

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So it has begun. Much debate has arisen regarding the topic of cleaner transportation and for Nebraska it is only a matter of time before this deliberation to engulf us. Lincoln, Nebraska, has been on the top 25 cleanest cities in the U.S. and has been for several years now. It is pivotal to realize what becoming a part of "Clean Cities" means and also what the process is to become part of it.

The cleanest cities are hard to define due to the fact that, "What is a clean city?" A "Clean City" can be defined as a community that contributes to the energy, environmental, and economic security by supporting decisions made by the people and businesses in an area to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. When it was first recognized in 1993 in response to the Energy Policy Act (EPA Act), communities stood together forming voluntary, community based programs to reduce overall consumption through the means of the government and select-eager businesses. Nebraska is one of a number of states with an exceptional air quality record due to regional and political influences. Our publically owned power utility also has a tremendous influence as well.

In almost 90 coalitions, government agencies, the U.S. Department of Energy, and private companies voluntarily come together under the union of Clean Cities. This partnership helps all parties identify mutual interests and meet the objectives of reducing the use of imported oil, developing regional economic opportunities, and improving air quality. According to the DOE, Nebraska has no initiatives for electric vehicles but Nebraska does have initiatives for renewable fuels. If only there was a way to initiate the construction of energy power points for refueling electric cars. Perhaps creating special parking places for these vehicles and incentives for downtown parking would be critical and great way to promote electric cars. Demonstrations from public entities (i.e. UNL) using this technology would be a great motivational tool.

How will it be possible to implement Clean Cities in Lincoln or Omaha? So far we know Lincoln is one of the cleanest cities in the U.S. But the Lincoln and Omaha area does not have an electric fueling station within a radius of 200 miles.

Missouri has projects where 4 school districts with non-refrigerated, diesel-powered delivery trucks are electric. Supported by the DOE; they grant reduction of 80,000 gallons of diesel, air emissions by 60,000 pounds, and fuel savings of a minimum of \$250,000 per year. With all of the University innovations and technological advancements put forth from years of research, why not turn the cleanest city knob a couple notches towards the cleaner side?

There is a program called the Vehicle Technologies Program which is an ongoing program to continue developing technologies for more energy efficient and environmentally friendly sustainability standards. The general idea is to aim for energy security while trying to reduce impacts on the environment and lowering costs. EATON has developed several technologies such as: Level 2 Pow-R-Station, Network Manager Software, DC Quick Charger, and Residential Electric Vehicle Charging Solutions which can be found online. The states incentives are primarily for alternative fuels and the subsidies are a focal point

Speaking to committee officials and personnel about such issues is one of many steps that are needed to procure such issues. The current administration already supports incentives to encourage Americans to buy electric cars, and it has devoted \$2.4 billion in stimulus money to the development of a domestic electric-car industry. But ethanol is the way to go with every policymaker. The electric car was a part of the 90's policy but was later cut off. But from the result of the 2012 budget, brought on by the president, financing increased for battery research and also proposes good ideas for accelerating the spread of electric vehicles, which also includes the maximum of a \$7,500 tax credit for the purchase of a plug-in vehicle if the area had a convenient available charging station, which would give buyers their refund immediately rather than at tax time.

We can all learn from our mistakes by increasing awareness and by getting the ball rolling on a hopeful downward slope of clean initiatives. Clean Cities activities stimulate local economies, facilitate the adoption of new transportation technologies, and make communities cleaner, healthier places to live. We need to prove to ourselves that when it comes to energy independence, we can deploy these types of technologies, not just one or two but trying to incorporate several and move forward towards a cleaner tomorrow.
