

More Environment-Friendly, Fuel Cell Powered Hondas to Traverse the Streets of Los Angeles Soon

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By Jenny McLane

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This is the latest buzz words in the car industry, but what is it really all about?

Honda FCX powered by Honda fuel cells.

It has been two years since Honda released the Honda FCX which has become the first fuel cell vehicle in the world to receive government certification, paving the way for the commercial use of fuel cell vehicles. This comes as no surprise as Honda has always been an advocate of environmental consciousness and a pioneer in developing cutting edge technology in protecting the environment. The fuel-cell is propelled by electricity generated by a hydrogen-oxygen chemical reaction, and its only emission, amazingly, is water vapor. Now, with a fresh stamp of approval from the Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board, Honda is delivering a family of new FCX fuel-cell vehicles to its first customer, the city of Los Angeles, known for its strict environmental emission rules to eliminate the overwhelming air pollution already at its midst.

The latest version of Honda fuel cells delivers about 15% more maximum drive motor torque than the previous prototypes and also provides improvements in mid-to-high range power output characteristics and acceleration. It also has an amplified driving range of 220 miles, about 25 miles more than the previous model.

How does the fuel cell work?

In principle, a fuel cell functions like a battery. Dissimilar from a battery though, a fuel cell does not run down or require recharging. It will produce energy in the form of electricity and heat as long as fuel is

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supplied. The type of fuel cell used in the Honda FCX is called a Polymer electrolyte fuel cell. Powered by Hydrogen gas the fuel cell provides power to the FCX's AC synchronous electric motor to give the FCX a top speed of around 93 mph. With engine output at around 60kW, Honda claims the clean FCX has similar performance to the its petrol drinking brother, the Honda Civic. Fuel Cells produce electricity from an external fuel supply as opposed to the limited internal energy storage capacity of a battery.

A fuel cell system, which includes a "fuel reformer", can utilize the hydrogen from any hydrocarbon fuel – from natural gas to methanol, and even gasoline. Since the fuel cell relies on chemistry and not combustion, emissions from this type of a system would still be much smaller than emissions from the cleanest fuel combustion processes. In fact fuel cells running on hydrogen derived from a renewable source will emit nothing but water vapor. Water vapor being its only exhaust, a fuel cell powered vehicle such as the Honda FCX produces completely no harmful emissions into the atmosphere. Fuel cells were first used in a practical application by NASA in the 1960's for their Apollo space

program. For decades sensible fuel cell application was regarded as too costly and too difficult for automobile usage. Through constant research and development its utilization may become a reality, the only problem that crops up is the source for refueling.

Honda's proposed solution for refueling stations.

If fuel cell powered cars ever become popular, gas stations may soon have to start supplying hydrogen as well as their regular petroleum based products. But since currently there are only a handful of them around, this may be far from happening.

Until then, Honda will continue to do some research on other possible solutions. An experimental Home Energy Station (HES) is seen as the most feasible. The HES could generate hydrogen from natural gas for use in fuel cell vehicles while supplying electricity and hot water to the home. The new HES system that has been jointly developed with strategic fuel cell partner Plug Power Inc. is located on the grounds of Honda R&D Americas in Torrance, California, and will undergo experiments in hydrogen production, storage and fueling, as part of ongoing research into hydrogen energy sources. The new HES system, which can currently produce enough hydrogen to refill the tank of a Honda FCX hydrogen fuel cell vehicle taking just a few minutes once a day.

Honda's dedication to a greener and cleaner environment.

Honda started research and development on fuel cells in 1989. Ten years after they have been road testing fuel cell powered vehicles in the US and Japan. Honda is a member of the California Fuel Cell Partnership (CaFCP) based in Sacramento, California, and has been working closely with that organization.

Honda has had a long history of environmental breakthroughs and dedication with their automobiles. Even from way back in 1975, Honda scored it big with their CVCC as being the first vehicle to meet the amended Clean Air act standard. Honda was also the first auto company to produce a vehicle, the Honda Civic, to meet the low emission vehicle (LEV) standard in all 50 states and the first to sell a

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gasoline car meeting first California's Ultra Low Emission Vehicle standard and subsequently the "Super" ULEV standard (Accord).

Honda was also the first to sell a combined gasoline and electric powered vehicle, the Insight, in the U.S. and early in 2002 they introduced the Civic Hybrid, it was the first mass marketed hybrid model. The Civic GX was the first dedicated mass-produced natural gas vehicle when it went on sale in 1998 and has been recognized by the EPA, as the cleanest internal combustion engine in the world. Truly, Honda understands the need for environmental care and the total independence in the future for petroleum based products to fuel their engines.

With all of this new technology cropping up, the motoring world doesn't seem like it used to be. The good thing is it all boils down to consumer preference. Many products though cater to the whole welfare of the people even when it is channeled through too many aspects. What is inevitable is that no matter how efficient and durable your vehicle is, it will be subjected to wear and tear. Constant use and driving calls for constant maintenance and preventive maintenance also, at Auto Parts Train we continually update our catalogs to provide the most complete and comprehensive lineup of superb Honda parts. With 25 years of experience we know that the automobile industry constantly evolves and new technology crops up every now and then. You can be sure that we are always on our guard for a high end Honda part.

Be it a Honda replacement part, a Honda collision part or a Honda performance enhancement part, Auto Parts Train is here to serve you. Browse through our 24-hour online shop to find the perfect Honda part for you. Click on this link (<http://www.partstrain.com/ShopByVehicle/HONDA>) to see our wide array of first rate Honda auto parts that we have on stock. We guarantee all the fit and quality of our Honda car parts. For assistance, you may call our toll free line, 1-888-251-1214, 12 hours a day, six days a week. Our very efficient and highly-trained customer service staff is standing by to help you.

Jenny McLane is a 36 year old native of Iowa and has a knack for research on cars and anything and everything about it. She works full time as a Market Analyst for one of the leading car parts suppliers in the country today.

What Are Hybrid Cars?

By Dennis Conner

Hybrid plants like corn or rice are familiar to many but hybrid cars? Are these space-age cars that do not need fuel to run or even fly in the sky?

To the uninitiated, hybrid cars may seem like an alien form or specie that requires a lot of explaining. To car and environment aficionados, hybrid cars are either bane or boon especially with the increasing fuel prices worldwide.

Hybrid cars may just be the answer of modern scientists to the rising fuel cost and the deteriorating quality of the environment. Contrary to your belief, hybrid cars are no longer new to the society as the

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auto industry has come up with various models of hybrid cars. Car manufacturers who have been left behind in the race for the perfect hybrid car have announced their intention to compete in the market.

Hybrid vehicles are those that possess the dual qualities of being able to run on more than two sources of power like gasoline or battery. The first hybrid vehicles came in the form of hybrid bikes which has fuel features but can be operated using the pedal skills of the rider. Hybrid cars are more common in Europe particularly in Norway and France. Hybrid buses that are operated by overhead and by diesel when they travel in other areas without the overhead wires are also being used in Seattle. There are also hybrid submarines which run on nuclear, diesel or electric energy.

The most common hybrid vehicle is that powered by both gasoline and electricity. A hybrid car attempts to allow the owner to save on fuel while being environment friendly. However, can hybrid cars be efficient enough to provide long distance travel without being refueled or recharged?

Most gasoline-powered vehicles answer this requirement although they cause more damage to the environment because of the emissions. On the other hand, electric vehicles are more environment-friendly but can only go on a maximum of 161 kilometers until it is recharged and the recharging time is very slow. The hybrid car combines the advantages of both the gasoline-powered and the electric-powered car.

A hybrid car possesses a gasoline engine much like the ordinary gasoline powered car but the engine is much smaller, more environment-friendly due to lesser emissions and more efficient. It also possesses a very high tech electric motor which allows dual use of batteries and energy.

The hybrid car may just be in its infancy but the human mind can very well make sure that the hybrid cars will be the cars of the future.

The author is a regular contributor to Hybrid Headquarters

where more

hybrid car information is freely available.



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