

## Texas Department of Transportation sees whether it's easy being 'green'

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IRVING — Few government agencies rack up miles like the Texas Department of Transportation — and now the leadership is trying to go a bit greener.

This month, four Ford F-250 pickups powered by compressed natural gas were rolled out as part of a pilot program to see whether more of the department's fleet of roughly 10,000 vehicles can use something other than gasoline or diesel.

"Today, the state's largest fleet operator is taking advantage of the state's largest natural resource," said Bill Meadows of Fort Worth, a Texas Transportation Commission member. Meadows addressed a small crowd at a Clean Energy fuel station near Belt Line and Rock Island roads in Irving.

The pilot project will try to determine whether CNG can meet the department's day-to-day needs, officials said.

If it can, many more CNG vehicles could be introduced over the next several years.

Compressed natural gas costs about 40 percent less than gasoline, said Julie Wilson, Chesapeake Energy's vice president of corporate development.

Right now, the biggest issue for ordinary motorists is access to CNG, because fueling stations are few and far between.

But many in the industry say that could change in the near future.

Many corporations and government entities that operate large fleets are converting to CNG, said James S. Ramsey III, business development manager for Clean Energy. His company operates 279 CNG stations in places such as Texas and California.

If enough fleets convert, the number of places to refuel will expand, making CNG a more attractive option for everyday motorists, Ramsey said.

In Irving, motorists can use the station near Belt Line and Rock Island roads. (The actual address is 128 N. Briery Road.)

The pumps aren't typically staffed but accept credit cards.

Converting some Transportation Department pickups to CNG furthers the region's mission to improve its air quality and comply with federal clean-air laws, said Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.











Clean Energy is a publicly traded company whose largest shareholder is well-known natural gas advocate T. Boone Pickens.

Precisely how the state Transportation Department will use the CNG vehicles isn't yet known. One option is for project managers and inspectors to use them while touring highway construction sites, spokesman Tony Hartzel said.

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