



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 12, 2009

CONTACT: Gary Rasp
(512) 585-2084
Info@PlugInTexas.org

PUCT Chair Barry Smitherman Addresses New Electric Vehicle Coalition
Plug-In Texas Formed to Raise Awareness of Hybrid and All-Electric Cars

AUSTIN – Barry Smitherman, chairman of the Public Utility Commission of Texas, Thursday addressed the first public gathering of a new coalition created to promote electric vehicles (EVs) in the Lone Star State.

Smitherman kicked off a roundtable discussion in Houston hosted by Plug-In Texas. Founding members of the coalition include Luminant, a Dallas-based electricity generator, Environment Texas, the Environmental Defense Fund and the Texas Automobile Dealers Association.

“Electric vehicles hold real promise on several fronts,” Smitherman said. “By making your next vehicle an EV, we can improve air quality, enhance America’s energy security, and create new jobs.”

“Plug-ins are a great fit with wind power,” Smitherman added. “Many consumers are expected to recharge their electric car batteries at night, tapping into underutilized renewable, off-peak electricity.”

Most large automobile manufacturers and several start-up companies have announced plans to release a line of plug-in hybrid or battery-driven plug-in cars by late 2010 or 2011. The Obama Administration, which in August set a goal of putting one million electric vehicles on the road by 2015, has agreed to jump start the industry by providing \$8.5 billion in loans for the production of fuel-efficient cars, including plug-in hybrid and all-electric vehicles.

Phil Wilson, senior vice president for public affairs at Luminant, said Texas could lead the way in the commercialization of electric vehicles.

“Texas is in an ideal position to promote this new technology on a large scale,” Wilson said. “We have an educated workforce, strong academia and technology centers – and, of course, a long-standing love affair with cars.”

--more--

Kate Robertson, an energy efficiency specialist with the Texas chapter of the Environmental Defense Fund, said her organization strongly supports to raise public awareness of the benefits of electric vehicles.

“EDF looks for realistic solutions that can effect meaningful change,” Robertson said. “Replacing gasoline-powered cars with electric vehicles would help reduce mobile sources of pollution and improve air quality in Texas cities, particularly when the electricity used from charging comes from non-emitting or renewable resources.”

McCall Johnson, a clean energy advocate for Environment Texas, said electric vehicles show great promise in reducing greenhouse gases, particularly if they are adopted on a large scale.

“Electric vehicles are among the few technologies capable of producing dramatic reductions in global warming pollution from automobiles over the long term,” Johnson said. “Environment Texas strongly supports the coalition’s efforts to promote EVs in Texas.”

Most designs for PEVs feature a new generation of lithium-ion batteries – the same technology used in cell phones and many other electronic devices. Plans for a public infrastructure of charging stations are also underway, and several companies are manufacturing charging units that will allow motorists to charge their car batteries in parking lots and garages, restaurants and other locations.

“We think there is great potential for plug-in vehicles in Texas, particularly in the metropolitan areas,” said Rob Braziel, chief executive officer of legislative affairs for the Texas Automobile Dealers Association. “The product offerings coming from automobile manufacturers will offer consumers attractive and cleaner vehicles that are fun to drive and less expensive to maintain.”

Other presenters at Thursday’s seminar included Andrew Jetton, director, retail strategy for Reliant Energy; James Tillman, assistant director of finance for the City of Houston; Dr. Mladen Kezunovic, Eugene. E. Webb Professor of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Texas A&M University; and Shalini Ramanathan, vice president, Development/South Central U.S., Renewable Energy Systems Americas, Inc.

In addition to the aforementioned founding members of Plug-In Texas, Reliant Energy and the Association of Electric Companies of Texas provided underwriting support for Thursday’s event. CenterPoint Energy graciously supplied a Ford Escape and Toyota Prius converted plug-in electric vehicles for attendees to view.

About Plug-In Texas: *Plug-In Texas is a broad-based and growing statewide coalition of private and public interests dedicated to supporting policy changes that promote battery electric, plug-in hybrid and all-electric vehicles in Texas, as well as the infrastructure needed to support them. Plug-In Texas will support activities that create new jobs, foster development of new technologies, improve environmental conditions and spur economic activity that supports the electric vehicle industry. The coalition intends to serve as a clearinghouse for information on EVs, and will support initiatives that market their development and promote their commercial viability. For more information about Plug-In Texas, visit www.PlugInTexas.org*