

# Gas Sense— In Search Of The Elusive Hybrid Car

(NAPSA)—Paying more than \$50 to fill up a gas tank is enough to get anyone's attention. Which is why so many people these days are looking for gas-“sipping” hybrids to put in their garages and why many of them are going online to track the elusive vehicles down.

According to a recent AP-AOL Poll, 41 percent say that gas prices are making them seriously consider purchasing a more fuel-efficient car, including hybrids. That's not surprising, since hybrids can go about five times farther on a gallon of gas than traditional gasoline-powered vehicles—which at today's prices means a savings of hundreds of dollars a year at the pump.

The only problem is trying to find a hybrid. Waiting lists are long across the country. In Houston, for example, the waits can last as long as six months. The waits are so chronic, in fact, that some people are paying more for used hybrids than new ones. A used 2004 or 2005 Toyota Prius can sell for \$1,000 to \$3,000 over the sticker price of a new one, Kelley Blue Book reports.

Hybrids dramatically boost fuel economy by combining battery power with a traditional gasoline engine. Not only can they cut fuel costs, but they can cut your tax bill, since owners of hybrids can claim a special federal tax deduction.

Those looking to pare down at the pump with a hybrid can get help nabbing one by going online. Services like America Online, for example, have a dedicated area that lets you search availability nationwide and look for good deals on hybrids.

Alexis Maybank of AOL Autos offers other tips for how to lever-



age the power of the Internet to find the hybrid that's right for you.

- **Consulting a trusted industry expert.** Sites such as Edmunds.com are good resources for hybrid pricing and rating information. Consumers can get detailed pricing information for their hybrid of choice along with an editor's rating and consumer rating for each vehicle. They can also access helpful articles and information on everything from optimizing mileage to the future of hybrids.

- **Getting a hybrid's history.** Before you buy your hybrid, however, it's always a good idea to get a vehicle's history. You can access a CARFAX Vehicle History report online that will reveal any problems your potential purchase may have.

- **Maximizing your hybrid's efficiency.** As with any car, there are ways to improve fuel economy. Drive the speed limit—it's not only safer but boosts mileage. Keep the A/C off as much as possible. Make sure your tires are properly inflated and check the pressure every week. Also, make sure you keep up with your oil changes and other routine maintenance.

Hybrids aren't the answer for everyone. If gas prices remain high, they can be an economical alternative for many. And, they are within reach, if you know where to look.