Latest Transportation Technologies Reduce Energy Use

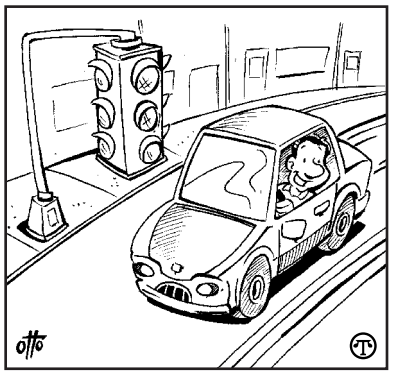
(NAPSA)—In the United States, automobiles now consume only about 60 percent of the gasoline, per mile driven, that they did in 1972. But with gasoline prices and congestion rising, America is becoming energy conscious once again. Thousands of cars stuck during commutes in dozens of congested metropolitan areas waste many gallons of fuel over the course of a year. Looking ahead, demand for energy of all kinds is likely to outstrip domestic capacity to produce it unless there are changes, according to President Bush.

Much of the nation's transportation system, however, is meeting this challenge by focusing on ways to use intelligent transportation systems to reduce delays and provide real-time information on all transportation modes so consumers have more choice, according to the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITS America).

"We have tools to help people travel more efficiently and that improves how we manage our nation's energy resources," says Max Rumbaugh, executive vice president of the Society of Automotive Engineers, and secretary of the ITS America Board of Directors. "These tools include better timing of traffic signals to allow improved traffic flow. Also, giving out real-time trip-related information on routes, weather and transit choices. Electronic toll collection and faster response to highway accidents also help reduce fuel use."

For example, studies conducted in Los Angeles, Paris, and Toronto show that reductions in fuel use of between 2-13 percent have been achieved through improved traffic signal operation, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Motor vehicles use fuel more efficiently when they operate at consistent speeds.

Other studies show that with regular re-timing of traffic signals alone travel time can be reduced by between 8-25 percent, according to the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Shorter trips require less fuel.



Meanwhile, at New York state's heavily traveled Tappan Zee toll bridge a manual toll lane can accommodate up to 450 vehicles per hour while the facility's electronic toll collection lanes can handle 1,000 vehicles per hour. "Motor vehicle engines get better fuel economy and pollute less when they avoid stop-and-start situations," says Rumbaugh.

If there is a highway accident, a general rule of thumb says it will take four minutes to clear the resulting congestion for every one minute it takes to clear the accident. Many localities are using highway cameras to cut response times, and minimize traffic slowdowns, vehicle emissions and wasted fuel.

Also, if travelers want to use energy-saving public transit (subway, bus or ferry), pre-trip information available on the Internet in many cities helps them make mode choices, estimate travel times, and select routes prior to leaving.

ITS America is an educational and scientific public-private partnership of 600 member organizations promoting the use of advanced technologies in surface transportation. For additional information on intelligent transportation systems, contact: ITS America, Suite 800, 400 Virginia Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20024-2730, call (202) 484-4581, or visit the ITS America Web site at http://www.itsa.org.