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East Coast may get a Hydrogen Highway

Gas 2.0 (blog) - January 28, 2010

A Connecticut company is planning a "hydrogen highway" for the East Coast to give owners of hydrogen-fueled cars a place to fill up. Using electrolysis technology, SunHydro has plans to build 11 self-contained solar refueling stations extending from Portland, Maine, to southern Florida. The stations will use electricity generated from solar power to split water into hydrogen and gas, resulting in significantly lower emissions than the traditional method of transporting hydrogen to fueling stations by truck or reforming it from natural gas.

"Our goal is to make it possible for a hydrogen car to drive from Maine to Miami strictly on sun and water," SunHydro company president Michael Grey said. "Having talked to several of the auto manufacturers, the indication that we've received is that there has to be a network of stations on the east coast for them to bring cars here," Grey said. "They want to bring cars here, but there's nowhere to fuel them."

The stations cost up to \$3 million to install, and rely on private funding. Grey said the company hopes to expand westward. Several automakers are continuing to develop hydrogen fuel cell technology. General Motors, Nissan, Honda and Mercedes Benz have such vehicles already developed.

UDOT Fights Bill to Open I-15 HOV Lane

Provo Daily Herald - January 26, 2010

SALT LAKE CITY – A Salt Lake City lawmaker is working to remove the double white lines regulating the entry or exit of the HOV lanes on I-15 in Salt Lake and Utah Counties. The Utah Department of Transportation is fighting Democratic Sen. Karen Morgan’s bill, which narrowly passed committee this week.

Senate Bill 38 would not only require UDOT to allow continuous access into and out of the lanes with a single, dotted white line, but it would also give HOV lane access to single-occupant vehicles during off-peak travel times. UDOT said it would cost \$7 million to convert the lane to regular use during non-peak hours, and for the installation of 56 signs to inform drivers of the hourly state of the lane.

UDOT’s Carlos Braceras said the department has already signed a \$14 million contract to use the lane as an electronic toll lane, and the agency would have to pay to get out of the contract.

Wash. to Cut Stormwater Pollution from Highways

Seattle Times – January 26, 2010

SEATTLE – Thousands of miles of Washington highways will be gradually retrofitted to prevent polluted stormwater runoff into rivers, lakes and Puget Sound, according to a legal settlement reached Tuesday. In the agreement, the state Department of Transportation agreed that whenever it builds new highways, it will spend a small amount to fix existing roads which were constructed without sediment ponds or other pollution controls.

Environmental law firm Earthjustice and the group Puget Soundkeeper Alliance challenged the DOT’s stormwater discharge permit last year, saying it didn’t meet regulations of the federal Clean Water Act. Despite the state’s severe budget crisis, officials said up to 20 percent of a highway project’s stormwater control costs will be spent to fix existing roads.

“This is a 7,000-mile highway system that generates enormous amounts of pollutants, most of which are discharged directly into waters without any treatment or storage whatsoever,” Earthjustice attorney Jan Hasselman said.

U.S. Lawmaker Urges Lease of Florida Toll Roads

Land Line Magazine – January 26, 2010

Florida – A U.S. representative out of Florida wants to follow Indiana’s lead and lease the state’s turnpike to the highest bidder. In a speech to the Florida Turnpike Commission and other transportation leaders on Jan. 15, U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-FL, said the 460-mile Florida Turnpike system, and other toll roads in the state, should be considered for privatization.

“While controversial, with proper protections to secure American ownership and interests, we should consider more effectively leveraging the assets of these tolling agencies for a better financial return,” said Mica, a ranking Republican member of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He admitted that his remarks “went over like a lead balloon” to the

audience of toll road officials, but said he plans to “do everything possible to encourage consideration of privatization” as his Committee drafts a six-year transportation authorization bill for Congress to consider.



An asset transaction such as Rep. Mica proposes here has benefited Indiana and others. However, restricting ownership to US firms would severely limit this as a viable option. Privatization had, as its greatest advocates, President Bush and then Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters a few years ago. It will take the same kind of leadership to make privatization work in the near future. TW

Alabama Lawmakers Debate \$1B Road, Bridge Plan

Land Line Magazine – January 25, 2010

Alabama – The state Senate in Alabama is considering a \$1 billion spending plan for road and bridge projects throughout the state, hoping eventually to let voters have the final say. Sen. Lowell Barron, D-Fyffe, is leading the debate for a proposed constitutional amendment to transfer money from a state savings account for roads and bridges, which has about \$2.6 billion accumulated from natural gas wells drilled in Alabama-owned waters along the state’s coast.

Barron tried to get the bill to reroute \$100 million annually for 10 years from Alabama’s Trust Fund through the Senate during the 2009 Legislative session, but it failed by two votes. SB121 would divide \$25 million annually among the state’s 67 counties and their cities for roadwork, with an additional \$75 million a year sent to the state transportation department.

If lawmakers approve the bill, it would move to the ballots on Nov. 2. With voter approval, the money would be allocated beginning in 2011.

Dulles Airport Unveils New AeroTrain System

ABC News – January 25, 2010

CHANTILLY, Va. – The Washington-Dulles International Airport offered a preview this week of its \$1.5 billion AeroTrain System designed to carry passengers to gates much faster. The debut came Tuesday after more than a decade of planning, and eight years of construction on the underground train system that will replace the bulky “mobile lounges” that have helped passengers reach their gates since the 1962 airport opening.

The AeroTrain system is one of the final products of the more than \$3 billion capital improvement program Dulles initiated ten years ago, before the Sept. 11 attacks damaged the airline industry. The program was funded by bonds, which are repaid by charging fees to the carriers that operate out of Dulles, a United hub and the largest of the three airports in the Washington region.

The underground train extends for nearly four miles with 29 cars traveling at speeds up to 42 mph. The airport estimates wait times to be under two minutes and the driver-less trains take a little over a minute to reach the next station. About 50 percent of the mobile lounges use will be

cut out, and nearly half of the mobile lounge drivers accepted a buyout offered by the airports authority. Fewer mobile lounges will also cut congestion on taxiways, where lounges often had to wait for an aircraft traveling from the terminal to the gates.



Those of us who travel into and out of the Washington Dulles Airport on a regular basis are going to miss the mobile lounges. NOT! This is a long-awaited improvement to the traveler's experience at Dulles. TW

Obama announces Projects for \$8B High-Speed Rail Funding

U.S. DOT Press Release – January 29, 2010

TAMPA, FL. – President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden on Thursday announced the projects to be awarded \$8 billion in stimulus funding to develop America's first nationwide high-speed intercity passenger rail service program. The awards will serve as a down payment on developing or laying the groundwork for 13 new, large-scale high-speed rail corridors across the country.

The projects selected include Florida, receiving up to \$1.25 billion to develop a new high-speed rail corridor between Tampa and Orlando with trains running up to 168 mph and California, getting up to \$2.25 billion for the planned connection from Los Angeles to San Francisco and points in between; trains will travel up to 220 mph.

The \$8 billion long-term spending plan, announced in April 2009, includes an additional \$1 billion per year down payment for five years in the federal budget to jump-start the program. Over \$55 billion was applied for in project proposals for the funding.

Other major corridor projects awarded are: Chicago-St. Louis-Kansas City; Madison-Milwaukee-Chicago; Charlotte-Raleigh-Richmond-Washington, D.C.; Eugene-Portland-Seattle; Detroit-Chicago; Ohio; Northeast.

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