

Charleston County News Release

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NOTE TO MEDIA: The Green Fleet hybrids will be on display outside of the Lonnie Hamilton III, Public Services Building (4045 Bridge View Drive, North Charleston, SC 29405) on July 23 and 24, before they hit the road to provide service to the citizens of the county.

See photos: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/greenfleet.htm>

Charleston County's New Green Fleet: More Fuel Efficient and Air Friendly

County purchases two new hybrid vehicles on display outside of the Public Services Building, July 23 and 24.

In an effort to become more fuel efficient and environmentally conscious, Charleston County Government recently purchased two new 2008 white Ford Escape hybrid vehicles.

"This is a significant move on the County's part," said Linda Slater, Project Officer in the Charleston County Administrator's Office, who championed the idea for the County to get hybrid vehicles. "Like everyone, the County is facing rising gas prices and looking for ways to save money. More importantly, the County wants to set an example in conserving energy and protecting air quality."

The vehicles are "full" hybrids, meaning they automatically switch between pure electric power and pure gasoline engine power, or a combined operation to maximize efficiency and performance.

Charleston County has been actively involved in strategies to reduce air pollution since 2002 with the signing of a compact with the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"Charleston County agreed to implement programs aimed at reducing the levels of harmful ground-level ozone concentrations," said Slater. "Motor vehicle emissions, primarily hydrocarbons, are a major factor in harmful ozone production. Hybrid vehicles provide the benefit of greater fuel efficiency and lower emissions."

Hybrids generally initially cost more than their standard-engine counterparts. The price difference is about \$4,000 for most models, according to Slater.

"Although the initial cost may be higher, hybrids save money in fuel costs and lower maintenance costs over the life of the vehicle, and also have excellent warranties and higher resale values," said Slater.

As part of a state procurement contract, the Ford Escape hybrid model that Charleston County purchased has a base price of \$24,044. The base manufacturer suggested retail price (MSRP) for the same vehicle is \$26,325, giving the government a savings of \$2,281 per vehicle.

Charleston County currently maintains approximately 700 vehicles in its fleet, with about 360 of those being assigned the Sheriff's Office. The Solicitor's Office has been using Honda Civic hybrids for several years. The two new Ford Escapes will be the first hybrid vehicles placed in the County Motor Pool for general use.

The new cars will be on display outside of the Lonnie Hamilton III, Public Services Building (4045 Bridge View Drive; N. Charleston, SC 29405) on July 23 and 24, before they hit the road to provide service to the citizens of the county.

Both cars boast the County's new Green Fleet logo, specially designed by Danica Fri, Charleston County's Assistant Public Information Officer, for these vehicles and hopefully many other "green" vehicles in the future.

Governments "Go Green" – A new trend (*Source: Center for a New American Dream and the National Association of Counties*)

- New York City Government has purchased over 650 Toyota Prius vehicles for use in a variety of municipal agencies, such as the Departments of Parks and Recreation, Health, Buildings, and Transportation.
- The Martin County, FL Sheriff's Office uses 11 Priuses and eight hybrid Civics for detective work, parking enforcement and other non-emergency tasks.
- King County, WA replaced its Chevy Malibus with Toyota Priuses, and estimates an overall cost saving of \$2,660 savings per vehicle.
- The City of Houston, TX replaced its 1997 Dodge Neons with 2002 Toyota Priuses with an estimated overall saving about \$5,900.

SIDE BAR: Ford Escape Hybrid (*Source: Ford Motor Company*)

- Its gasoline engine and electric motor work in concert, providing performance similar to that of a V-6 engine. In less demanding situations, the Escape Hybrid can run on its electric motor alone (at speeds up to 25 mph), its gasoline engine alone or the most efficient combination of the two.
- Full hybrids achieve their greatest improvement in fuel economy during stop-and-go driving, when the electric motor is most efficient. In fact, the Escape Hybrid provides approximately 80 percent better fuel economy in city driving than the conventional V-6 Escape and can travel more than 500 miles in city driving on a single tank of gasoline.
- It is an extremely clean vehicle to operate – an amazing 99.4 percent cleaner, on average than an unregulated vehicle. Escape Hybrid meets strict Super Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle (SULEV II) and Advanced Technology Partial Zero Emissions Vehicle (AT-PZEV) standards.
- Electric Motor: The Escape Hybrid has a powerful, compact electric motor that is capable of powering the vehicle up to 25 mph without ever using the gas engine.
- Regenerative Braking: The Escape Hybrid recharges its battery pack when the brakes are applied. This eliminates the need to "plug in" to regenerate the electric motor's power.
- Engine: The Escape Hybrid is equipped with a standard 2.3-liter/14 gallon, 133-horsepower, hybrid engine. The Atkinson cycle engine uses an advanced combustion system to maximize power and efficiency of its fuel.
- Gas mileage: The Escape Hybrid achieves 34 mpg in the city and 30 mpg on the highway. In an urban environment, it offers 70 percent better fuel economy than a 14 gallon non-hybrid engine. (34 city mpg Hybrid vs. 20 city mpg, 14 gallon four-wheel drive vehicle. Mileage will vary.)
- Interior: Interior fabric is made from recycled materials.
- Warranty: Has an extended 8 year/100,000 mile limited warranty.
- Cost: As part of a state procurement contract, the Escape Hybrid model Charleston County purchased has a base price of \$24,044. The base manufacturer suggested retail price (MSRP) for the same vehicle is \$26,325, giving the government a savings of \$2,281 per vehicle.

SIDE BAR: Hybrid Vehicles (*Source: Center for a New American Dream and the National Association of Counties*)

- Powered by both an internal combustion engine and a battery-operated electric motor, hybrids can achieve up to twice the fuel economy of a conventional car and produce 30 to 50 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions.
- Although the retail price of hybrids exceeds their conventional counterparts by about \$4,000, hybrids can save money when the total cost of vehicle ownership is taken into account. Higher resale values, excellent warranties, lower projected maintenance costs (because the combustion engine receives less wear), and lower fuel costs (as much as 50 percent lower depending on terrain and other driving conditions) can offset hybrid vehicles' higher initial purchase price.

Visit the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.

- Written by Jennie Davis -