

The AEGPL's autogas roadmap, published in May 2009, sets out a vision in which autogas accounts for 10 per cent of Europe's road transport fuel by 2020, a significant jump up from the current level of around 2 per cent. Independent econometric analysis suggests that this development would yield significant benefits for individual end-users and society as a whole, including 350 million tonnes of avoided CO2 emissions, €20.4bn saved in avoided external costs, due largely to improved air quality in Europe's cities, and €41bn in savings for individual end-users. At a time when citizens are under increasing pressure to balance the twin imperatives of sustainability and economic restraint, the status of autogas as an affordable and environmentally friendly solution makes it a sensible and attractive option.

The potential contribution of autogas is increasingly apparent in various member states, including Germany and Italy, where government policy has helped stimulate significant growth. If there is one central message that I and my colleagues from the sector need to communicate to decision makers in Brussels, it is that they can play a major role in transforming the potential described above into reality. In its dual role as a legislator and a disseminator of best practices, the EU can transform a patchwork of local and national initiatives into a coherent

Paul Voss is manager of energy and environment policy at AEGPL

European strategy. In Autogas – and alternative gaseous fuels in general – Europe has an immediately available resource that can enhance the sustainability, security, and competitiveness of its road transport mix. We look forward to working closely with the European institutions – particularly the parliament which has already demonstrated its willingness and ability to lead on this issue – with a view to optimising this potential. ★



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Into the mix

Bart van Aerle says autogas is the best alternative for the European road transport fuel mix, and urges Brussels to move fast if 2020 targets are to be met

“The latest autogas systems can easily comply with the Euro-5 emission regulation”

*Prins alternative fuel systems’
Bart van Aerle*



Autogas is the best alternative fuel for now and for the future, but politicians in Europe have only limited knowledge about its advantages. As an industry we must try to change this as quickly as possible. Looking at its advantages, autogas is a golden opportunity for the environment and motorists. It would be a huge mistake if politicians fail to take action immediately.

The technology available today is completely reliable and thoroughly tested by car manufacturers for applications on serial production vehicles, such as passenger cars, trucks, buses, and boats. In fact, a complete, trained dealer network and filling infrastructure is already available and, as proven in recent studies by the World LP Gas Association, autogas is by far the kindest traditional fuel to the environment from a well to wheel emission point of view. Other studies have shown similar results.

Autogas is currently Europe's most widely used alternative fuel, but still accounts for only two per cent of the European road transport fuel mix. Many drivers see the advantage of running on autogas versus traditional fuels for environmental, economical and efficiency reasons. The use of autogas as an alternative fuel on the new generation direct injection engines could significantly enhance the benefits of the technology in terms of fuel efficiency and lower emissions. The latest autogas systems can easily comply with the Euro-5 emission regulation, which recognises that fuel exhausts have an impact on air quality and human health, especially in urban areas where traffic is dense.

To reduce this impact, the EU has adopted legislation to impose stricter emissions caps on both diesel and petrol cars. Retrofit autogas systems can be implemented on a large scale immediately. The next step is to develop autogas powered vehicles in cooperation with car manufacturers. With good regulation and full support from Brussels we will be able to meet the target of

20 per cent alternative fuel vehicles by 2020, but we cannot sit back as we are already far from reaching the target of 10 per cent in 2010. The technology, the customer, the infrastructure, the manufacturer: everybody is ready to expand the share of autogas in the European road transport fuel mix. Where are we waiting for Brussels? Let's start today. ★

Bart van Aerle is managing director of Prins alternative fuel systems

What's the alternative?

When it comes to alternative fuels, the EU must develop a holistic policy that maintains fuel neutrality, argues **Jeffrey Seisler**

The commission and parliament have done an admirable job tackling the complex and diverse alternative fuels issues in the transport sector. But the policy approach has been disjointed, incremental, and imbalanced. With the current EU review of sustainable transportation fuels, the time is right for policymakers to look more holistically and systematically at a single alternative fuels policy directive that provides improved balance in supporting the various fuel and technology alternatives. To be successful, the right policy balance must be employed. Government policies worldwide are littered with examples of failures, mostly due to biases toward one fuel or another. While policymakers' intentions are generally good, too often the solutions created or selected to solve problems have instead created them.

The heart of the alternative fuel policy debate: can fuel neutrality be maintained and sustained, or should policymakers select a few "winners". Alternative fuel stakeholders generally advocate including everyone's fuel favourites, otherwise they run the risk of exclusion. Policymakers stress the need to develop a limited number of fuel infrastructures and fear that supporting too many fuels might dilute this objective.

Matthias Reute, the commission's energy and transport director general, addressed this at a sustainable transport policy conference earlier this month. He said, "Following the current hype a lot of you are supporting electric [vehicles]. Three years ago you might have supported biofuels; four years ago maybe hydrogen. We need a strong reflection of alternative modes of transport. Will we say goodbye to the internal combustion

engine or to different fuels depending on the modes of transport? Hydrogen or electric in the city; heavy goods vehicles based on biofuels? We need to find answers to these issues and find an answer to the question as to how technology neutral we have to be. The worst thing would be to make the wrong decision." He added, "We need to get the transport policy for the next 10 years right. We need a vision to 2050... We have to look where we have been reacting only incrementally. We must be innovative, imaginative, and courageous."

The alternative fuels policy must address and embrace three key elements involved in commercialising clean fuels. First, it must motivate demand by customers, who are most concerned about economics and the availability of reliable technology. Second, it must support vehicle manufacturers to build and sell commercially viable alternatives. And finally, alternative fuel infrastructures must be developed simultaneously with the vehicle technology to overcome the "chicken and egg" problem faced by all alternative fuels.

Fuel neutrality is fundamental since each fuel and technology has its benefits and challenges. But it is critical to recognise which ones, and at what level of market penetration, best fulfil the objectives of sustainability, energy security, and environmental balance while still optimising mobility for the public. Ultimately, if government policy works as it should, the consumer will determine which of the fuel alternatives find their way in the marketplace and which ones remain in niche markets. A well-balanced, comprehensive European alternative fuels policy will help set the right pathways today that lead us to the desired goals in 2050 and beyond. ★



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Dr Jeffrey Seisler is CEO of Clean Fuels Consulting