



# AAA + Advocacy

Fall 2005

*"AAA is calling on all Americans to learn and follow fuel conservation techniques...that will help the nation cope with the effects of Hurricane Katrina on the gasoline refining and distribution system in the United States."*

-AAA President Robert L. Darbelnet, 9/2/2005

*Long before Hurricane Katrina hit, Californians were dealing with their own fuel price issues and supply concerns. In the July/August and September/October issues of VIA magazine, CSAA CEO Jim Pouliot addressed supply and demand issues that affect the price of gasoline. In addition, CSAA has been working on a variety of policy issues related to California's long and short-term fuel needs. This issue of AAA + Advocacy focuses on our work relating to fuel conservation. From endorsing more accurate mileage testing to supporting greater research and development of alternative fuels, AAA has long made fuel conservation efforts a priority in its advocacy work.*

## Truth in Advertising for New Vehicles AAA Advocates for More Accurate Gas Mileage Estimates

Extensive AAA 'real world' road testing of hundreds of new vehicles found that the actual miles per gallon from daily driving falls well short of EPA estimates that are displayed on the windows of new cars in auto showrooms. As a result, AAA successfully supported legislation in Congress to improve the information provided to consumers as they consider new car purchases.

AAA's driving tests found dozens of examples where vehicle miles per gallon of the 2003 and 2004 model years were overestimated because of outdated 30-year-old EPA tests. Some of the miles per gallon estimates for the most popular vehicles driven today are significantly lower than the EPA estimates. The EPA has been overestimating fuel economy for a wide range of vehicle makes and models, including such popular vehicles as the Chevy Trailblazer, Dodge Neon, Honda Element, Jeep Grand Cherokee, Nissan Altima, Toyota 4Runner, and Toyota Corolla.

The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has been using tests of driving conditions that were developed in the late 1970s. Since that time, typical driving conditions for most motorists have changed significantly. For example, it is more likely that cars will be operated at speeds above 55 miles per hour on highways. In addition, motorists are more likely to face congested driving conditions on all types of roads, from  
*(continued on page 2)*

## AAA Supports Development and Greater Use of Alternative Fuels for Transportation

AAA urged Governor Schwarzenegger to sign Assembly Bill 1007 (Pavley) into law, which would produce a plan for the State of California to increase development and use of alternative fuels for transportation. The bill was signed by the Governor, and the new law will facilitate development of alternative fuel technology as a means of conserving transportation energy and improving air quality.

AAA recognizes that the transportation system has historically relied upon petroleum products as the predominant source of energy supplies. As the demand for energy in the transportation system has increased, the state of California has become increasingly dependent upon imported crude oil and petroleum products.

California's transportation system has not diversified into alternative fuels as energy sources as much as other sectors of the economy. As a result, the state's transportation system and economy have grown increasingly vulnerable to oil shocks that have a negative impact upon individual consumer finances, company balance sheets, and overall economic vitality.

While AAA does not believe that a single type of alternative fuel will provide a "magic bullet" to resolve problems associated with petroleum-based transportation energy, AAA believes that consumers will benefit from greater choice  
*(continued on page 3)*

(EPA Mileage Estimates...continued from page 1)

city arterial roads to suburban highways and rural two-lane roads.

AAA believes that the 'real world' driving tests are more meaningful to consumers as they consider the fuel economy of the different vehicles that they are considering for purchase. The AAA driving tests put vehicles through a range of driving cycles that include stop-and-go traffic, climbing steep grades, and other driving conditions in the city and on the highway that drivers are likely to face when they operate their motor vehicle.

To address this problem, AAA supported the 'Fuel Efficiency Truth-in-Advertising Act of 2005,' which Congress passed this year. AAA believes that consumers should have the most accurate information possible when it comes to the gas mileage that they can expect from the vehicles they purchase. The new law will require the EPA to reassess the validity of the method by which they test and recalculate the mpg estimates of new vehicles. As a result of the legislation that AAA championed, the EPA is expected to update and improve their fuel economy test procedures.

## The Hybrid-HOV Debate

### *Should hybrids be allowed into carpool lanes?*

California law now allows single-occupant, low-emission hybrid vehicles that get at least 45 mpg to use carpool lanes during commute hours. Currently, the Honda Civic Hybrid (2003-05), Honda Insight (2001-04) and Toyota Prius (2001-05) qualify for the program. However, there is still a lot of controversy around whether hybrids should be allowed into carpool lanes at all.

Carpool purists, those who believe carpool lanes should be reserved strictly for high-occupancy vehicles, would probably say no. The original intent of these lanes was to ease congestion by providing an incentive for solo drivers to pair up. Allowing solo drivers into carpool lanes will degrade their efficiency, and increase travel times for carpoolers and buses that use the lane.

On the other hand, environmentalists would argue that the more incentives to get low-emission hybrids on the road, the better. SUVs and light trucks still comprise 50% of all vehicles sold in the US today. If there were more policies like this that provided incentives to purchase fuel-efficient vehicles, perhaps we would see more of them on the road today.

So, what are the consequences of allowing these vehicles into carpool lanes? Will they clog up the carpool lanes and make them just as congested as regular lanes? What about the carpool lanes that are already reaching capacity? The California law sets parameters to prevent some of the adverse effects seen in other states. For example, the DMV will limit the number of decals it issues to 75,000 hybrids and Caltrans will determine which freeways will qualify for the program (e.g. I-80 thru Alameda County and Hwy 101 thru Marin County may already be too congested to allow any more additional vehicles).

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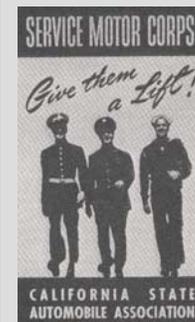
## A Look Back...

### *AAA's Fuel Conservation Work Over the Decades*

AAA fuel conservation efforts began in earnest during WWII. Window stickers that read "Keep it Under 40—



"Drive for Victory" were distributed at AAA offices as a reminder that slower driving would conserve fuel for the war effort. Our *Give 'Em a Lift* campaign encouraged carpooling through the Service Motor Corps.



AAA's wartime conservation campaigns became a model for efforts during the 1970s energy crisis. We distributed *Pool-it Don't Fuel-It!* bumper stickers to encourage carpooling and offered lower insurance rates to carpoolers. We also helped form RIDES, a Bay Area ride-sharing service.

During the 1980s and 1990s, AAA sponsored *Super Mileage* competitions with college students competing to build the most fuel-efficient engines. We also issued the *Gas Watcher's Guide* with tips on how to "make 5 gallons do the work of 6 gallons."

Our fuel conservation work is just one part of AAA's heritage of public service.



*(Hybrid-HOV Debate...continued from page 2)*

But beyond that, are there other unintended consequences? Our decision to utilize the carpool lane, more often than not, presents itself as a choice between convenience and time savings; it may be more convenient to drive alone, but you won't reap the time savings of the carpool lane.

Anyone can make that choice, no matter what their income level or financial status. When hybrid vehicles are allowed to use the lane, what it really means is that those who can *afford* a hybrid vehicle may use the lane, as these cars are not cheap. The first option is accessible to everyone, but the second is not. Does this introduce the unintended effect of social inequity?

Critics of high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, where solo drivers pay a toll to use the carpool lane, have made similar arguments. They claim that so-called "Lexus lanes" offer the rich a way to pay their way out of congestion while everyone else sits in traffic. Studies have shown that this is not true, and that many hourly wage earners use the lanes as a cost-effective way to increase their billable hours. At least with HOT lanes, you can pay the toll and use the lane whenever you need to, regardless of what car you drive.

## Survey Says...

*Should hybrids be allowed into carpool lanes? Weigh in on the debate by emailing [advocacy@csaa.com](mailto:advocacy@csaa.com).*

*(Alternative Fuels...continued from page 1)*

in non-petroleum fuels, including but not necessarily limited to ethanol, biodiesel, hydrogen, methanol, and natural gas. AAA believes that promotion of alternative fuels will relieve pressure on the already constrained supply of petroleum-based fuels, and result in a more reliable supply of fuel and less price volatility for consumers.

AAA supports the development of more transportation fuel choices for consumers. Greater availability of alternative fuel sources will give consumers more options for vehicle and fuel purchase and use. Greater development and use of alternative fuels provides an opportunity for job growth in California by encouraging technological innovation and capital investment.

## AAA's Advocacy Mission

For more than 100 years, AAA of Northern California has steadfastly spoken out on behalf of its Members and the traveling public. Because our 4.1 million Members in Northern California, Nevada and Utah represent a broad section of the population, the association works for balanced public policy positions on a variety of issues ranging from traffic safety and transportation to consumer protection and the environment.

## Advocacy in Action

*Highlights of Recent California Bills and Local Legislation supported by AAA*

**AB 68 (Montanez)**, the "Car Buyers Bill of Rights", provides consumers protection when buying new and used automobiles in California.

**AB 1222 (Jones)** establishes a pilot program to determine whether remote sensing devices can accurately measure emissions of pollutants from locomotives, one of the greatest public health risks to Californians. *This bill was signed into law.*

**AB 1660 (Pavley)** creates the *California Energy-Efficient Vehicle Group Purchase Program*, to encourage local and state agencies to purchase energy efficient vehicles. *This bill was signed into law.*

**SB 1020 (Migden)** authorizes an additional ¼ of 1% city/county sales tax to be collected and used for transit service and local road repair, doubling the current ¼ of 1% authorized by the Transportation Development Act (TDA).

AAA was an active member of the 'Save Proposition 42' coalition, which successfully lobbied to restore \$1.3 billion from **Proposition 42**, the state's portion of the sales tax revenue on gasoline, to transportation in the Governor's May budget revision for FY05/06.

With support from numerous stakeholders, including AAA, Metropolitan Transportation Commission adopted a **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) policy** that will condition regional discretionary funds for transit expansion projects on local land use plans and policies geared toward generating new transit riders and making the region's transit investments more cost-effective.