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CEC wants more Michigan biofuel pumps

By **KEVIN WALKER**
Michigan Correspondent

YPSILANTI, Mich. — The Clean Energy Coalition (CEC), a not-for-profit group based in Ypsilanti, has received a \$50,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth to help gas stations install pumps that will dispense the E85 ethanol gasoline blend or B20 biodiesel fuel.

“What we’re trying to do is lower the financial barrier to filling stations to put in new infrastructure,” said Sean Reed, executive director of the CEC. “It’s a helping hand for the fuel stations.”

A gas station can receive up to \$3,000 to convert existing equipment to be used for the alternative fuel, and up to \$4,000 to install new equipment.

The projects must be completed and the stations providing biofuel to the public by Aug. 31, 2007. Gas station owners must agree to provide E85 or B20 for at least three years after receiving the grant.

According to the CEC, many gas station owners are unaware of government money that’s available for this purpose. With federal and state incentives combined, a gas station owner may qualify for up to a 50 percent cost reduction to install or convert pumps for use with a biofuel.

The CEC was formed early this year by interested companies as well as local, state and federal government offices. These include the city of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the U.S. Department of Energy, Wacker Oil and other companies and organizations.

The CEC was created by the same stakeholders that spearheaded the Ann Arbor Area Clean Cities Coalition, which is now the CEC’s “core transportation program.” The Clean Cities program, in turn, is a creation of the U.S. Department of Energy, and is designed to help the country by reducing its consumption of imported oil. Reed believes this goal is good for the country, and good for agriculture.

“We’ve sent over \$1 trillion to countries in the Middle East when we could be supporting rural communities,” he said. “What we need to do in Michigan is make sure we get the pricing right.”

Reed said that E85 should be 20-30 cents per gallon less than regular unleaded gas to make it a worthwhile choice for consumers.

Applications for grant funding are being received by the CEC and NextEnergy, another not-for-profit located in Detroit. The deadline for submitting applications is Dec. 15. For more information on how to apply for a grant, call Sean Reed at 734-717-1455.

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