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Village Fleet Going Green
Vehicle Fueling Station to Help Village Conserve Energy, Protect the Environment

The Village of Oak Park took a regional leadership role in energy conservation and helping to reduce air pollution when its new compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicle fueling station was officially dedicated on Monday, April 22 – which is, appropriately, Earth Day 2002.

“Government must take the initiative in finding less polluting alternative energy sources if we want them to succeed,” said Village Trustee Barbara Ebner, who chairs both the Village Board’s Public Works Committee and *Keep Oak Park Beautiful*, a group working to create programs and educate the community about preventing litter, minimizing waste and enhancing the appearance of the Village.

“Oak Park citizens are long-standing advocates of strong environmental policies. This new station gives us the opportunity to put our words into actions,” she said.

The new Oak Park station provides clean-burning natural gas for the Village’s 18-car (and growing) CNG fleet, the largest publicly owned fleet in the region outside of the City of Chicago. Neighboring municipalities also can fuel their vehicles at the Oak Park station, which someday may serve individuals who drive one of the growing number of CNG vehicles available through most major automakers.

“Natural gas is an excellent fuel for generating electricity and heating our homes, but it has only recently been used as a transportation fuel,” Ebner said. “We hope that its use will expand since natural gas is among the cleanest burning alternatives fuels for automobiles available today.”

Municipal fleets are seen as an ideal place to begin introducing clean-burning vehicles in greater number. In Oak Park, for example, the vehicles are used by inspectors, street work crews and parking enforcement officers who often spend many hours with engines idling. By using alternate fuel vehicles, Village employees are doing their part to lower emission levels and reduce the environmental impact on the community, Ebner said.

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CNG Station
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An unassuming, lone pump at the Public Works Service Center on South Boulevard, the new station has earned the praise of state and federal environmental officials who see natural gas as playing a key role in efforts to reduce air pollution – especially in urban areas such as Chicago.

Fuel at the new Village station is supplied through a standard natural gas delivery line that serves nearby homes and businesses. The natural gas from the line is compressed in a small on-site facility, and delivered to the individual vehicles through a device very similar to a standard gasoline pump. Station patrons use a special credit card to make purchases 24-hours a day

In addition to recognition for the new CNG station, Oak Park also has been designated an Illinois Green Fleet, a program administered by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency that recognizes organizations with vehicles that use clean alternative fuels.

The cost of Oak Park's new CNG station was underwritten by a \$239,000 federal grant through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and \$60,000 grant from the Gas Technology Institute, a not-for-profit energy research and educational organization. The Village provided land and site improvements valued at \$74,750.

Representatives from the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Department of Commerce & Community Affairs, Chicago Department of Environment, Clean Cities Coalition, Gas Technology Institute, South Suburban Mayors Caucus, West Central Municipal Conference and elected officials from throughout the region were expected to join local officials at the dedication ceremony.

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