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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Whitman Takes a Spin in Electric Car Announces Incentive Package to Increase "Clean" Vehicles

Gov. Christie Whitman today test drove the NJ Venturer, a cutting edge alternative to gasoline- powered transportation. She also gave the green light to a package of incentives that will spur the acquisition and use of vehicles that rely on alternative fuel and advanced technology.

The Governor drove the hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle through the area surrounding the Statehouse and told the audience at the finish line that the day of the electric car is nearing. The vehicle will represent New Jersey in the Tour de Sol road rally in May.

"We'll all breathe easier when alternatively fueled and advanced technology vehicles- or AFVs and ATVs- become the standard on our roads and highways," the Governor said. "But air quality will be just one advantage. We'll be using up less of our fossil fuel supply. We'll be spending less for repairs, since fuel cells can last more than 30 years and have no moving parts. I am proud today to announce several new incentives for alternatively fueled and advanced technology vehicles."

First, the Governor said she will propose to the Legislature a corporate business tax credit for 50 percent of the cost businesses would incur to convert a vehicle to an AFV, to meet the incremental cost of acquiring an ATV, or to put in place an alternative refueling or electric vehicle recharging infrastructure.

In addition, the Governor signed Executive Order No. 94 that will enhance the state's commitment to include these vehicles in its own fleet at a faster rate than mandated. The state will exceed the Energy Policy Act acquisition requirements for these vehicles by 5 percentage points each year. In the 1999 and 2000 model years the acquired vehicles will meet the California Air Resources Board (CARB) low emission vehicle standards and from model year 2001 and thereafter vehicles will meet or exceed CARB ultra-low emission vehicle standards. This commitment will allow the state to exceed the mandate of the EPA by approximately 140 vehicles between 1999-2002.

In order to support this level of state ATV and AFV use, the Governor called for the development of a refueling infrastructure capable of handling the increased numbers. \$1.1 million of Petroleum Overcharge Reimbursement Fund (PORF) dollars will be committed to developing the infrastructure. The state will also maximize this infrastructure by negotiating with other public entities to use the facilities. In addition, the state will negotiate agreements with the private sector to refuel/recharge the state's ATV and AFV fleet.

"New Jersey is serious about using alternative fuel and advanced technology vehicles," said the Governor. "Not only do we want to win at the Tour de Sol, we want to take the lead in making AFVs and ATVs the future of transportation."

The Executive Order will also create a New Jersey Advanced Technology Vehicle Task Force. The 7 member task force will help oversee the acquisition of AFVs and ATVs by the state and determine the distribution of the vehicles among the various departments, operate a compliance monitoring program that will ensure that state AFVs that can use gasoline and alternative fuels are running on alternative fuels as much as possible, and oversee public education, training and awareness. The task force will also assist in the implementation of the other commitments made by the Governor in the Executive Order and the group will report the Governor annually on the progress of the program.

The task force will also work to remove any barriers that may inhibit the use of ATVs and AFVs around the state and will help establish guidelines to analyze the costs of vehicles with consideration to the cost of maintaining them throughout their life cycle. These costs will be taken into consideration by the Department of Treasury when acquiring vehicles for the state fleet. In addition the group will award an annual Clean Fleets Partner Award to public and private fleets that demonstrate outstanding leadership in using "clean" vehicles.

The task force will include representatives from the following: Board of Public Utilities, Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Transportation, State Treasury, Law and Public Safety, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

The order also requires the Economic Development Authority to provide financial assistance to viable companies who wish to acquire these vehicles but cannot afford to finance them on their own.

In order to enable other public entities to convert to alternative fuel vehicles or acquire ATVs, the Governor also proposed a \$1 million incentive program to aid them. This dedication of PORF money will cover conversion costs for about 200 vehicles.

Finally, the Division of Motor Vehicles will begin to develop an ATV and AFV school bus inspection program so that school districts interested in utilizing alternative-fuel or advanced technology school buses can be properly inspected.

Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Robert Shinn applauded the package. "Despite 30 years of technological innovation that has brought to the market cars that are far cleaner, safer, and more reliable than ever before, the internal combustion engine and the gasoline that fuels it remain among our largest sources of air pollution. I believe consumers are eager for advanced technology vehicles that meet their transportation needs without harming the environment and I know the technology exists to bring such cars to the showroom," the Commissioner said. " Meaningful incentives to purchase advanced technology vehicles are a wise investment in both environmental improvement and economical development."

The Governor said the Venturer she rode in should go a long way in advancing the use of alternate fuel and electric vehicles. The state-owned Solectria Force, is an electric vehicle that is equipped with a fuel cell power generator. The advanced nickel cadmium batteries and 12 hydrogen bottles allow the NJ Venturer to cover 400 miles at an average speed of 45 mph, and the vehicle is to reach top speeds of 70 mph.

"Today's demonstration of the NJ Venturer convincingly shows how we integrate cutting edge technology and environmental protection toward the goal of a better overall quality of life here in New Jersey," said Department of Transportation Commissioner James Weinstein. "The New Jersey Department of Transportation has over three years experience with both electric vehicles and fuel cells. Our three fuel cell projects and two electric vehicle projects have garnered national and international attention and, as such, we continue to position the state as a world leader in the high technology field. While these projects demonstrate the strength and benefits of public and private partnerships between New Jersey's high-tech firms , colleges and government, today's announcement takes them to a new level as we try to create wider acceptance and use of alternative fuel sources."

The NJ Venturer was created as part of Project NJ Venturer, a unique partnership of government agencies, technology companies and educational institutions, assembled to demonstrate the practicality of building and operating a hydrogen fuel cell and battery-powered electric vehicle.

The Venturer will represent the state in the 1999 American Tour de Sol road rally. The rally is an annual event where participants compete in a 225 mile road course. The event begins in Waterbury, Connecticut, on May 22 and ends in Lake George, NY, on May 29.

The NJ team will consist of staff from the Department of Transportation and students from participating schools. Schools participating in the program include Rutgers University, Rowan University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Burlington County College, Hunterdon County Polytech, Hunterdon Central High School and Cinnaminson High School.

In addition to building the fuel cell powered vehicle, the NJ Venturer program strives to address NJ's air quality problems by developing and encouraging the use of advanced vehicle and power technologies. It also provides students the opportunity to learn more about these new technologies.