

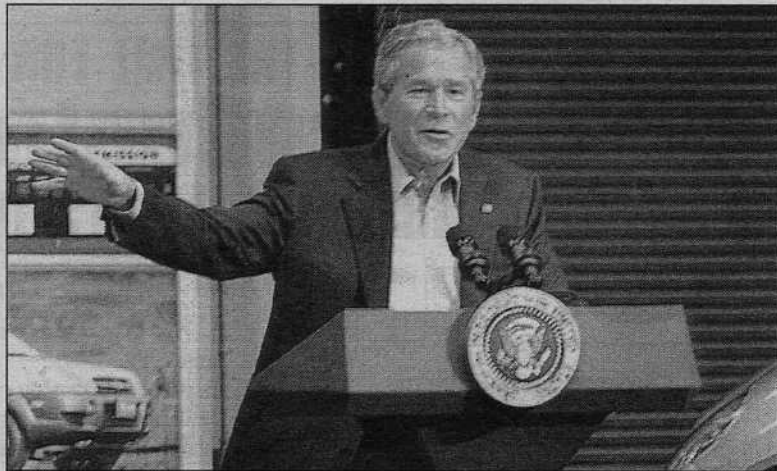
## Bush calls hydrogen 'fuel of the future'

By Wil Morat  
Staff writer

President Bush spoke about a future in hydrogen and hybrid vehicles at the California Fuel Cell Partnership in West Sacramento to commemorate Earth Day.

"I strongly believe hydrogen is the fuel of the future," he said Saturday at the research and development facility working to commercialize hydrogen cars and buses. "It has the potential — a vast potential — to dramatically cut our dependence on foreign oil. Hydrogen is clean, hydrogen is domestically produced and hydrogen is the way of the future."

The president addressed a gathering of about 150 people after touring the West Sacramento facility that celebrated its seventh anniversary Saturday. The partnership consists of 31 members, including auto manufacturers, oil and gas companies and governmental agencies. Established on Earth Day in 1999, the CFCP



Life Newspapers photo by Wil Morat

**PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH** addresses a crowd of about 150 special guests at the California Fuel Cell Partnership in West Sacramento on Saturday, April 22. "I strongly believe hydrogen is the fuel of the future," he said.

seeks to create a future with sustainable energy while eliminating pollution.

"We have a serious responsibility to be good stewards of our land. I appreciate the spirit of the fuel cell partnership," Bush said. "This nation does not have to choose between a strong economy and a

clean environment. We can have both."

The president reiterated points from January's State of the Union speech, where he acknowledged the United States is "addicted to oil," adding "it's harmful to our

security." With gas already topping \$3 a gallon in many areas of California, he also hinted that prices would continue to rise.

"When [gas] prices go up it hurts working people, it hurts small business people," he said. "We're gonna have a tough summer. The Energy Department predicts gas prices are going to go up."

Bush said his Advanced Energy Initiative has encouraged research by promoting hydrogen and hybrid vehicle use, and that people are "witnessing a major change in the driving habits of Americans." He has provided a tax credit up to \$3,400 in the August 2005 energy bill for people who purchase a hybrid vehicle, and statistics show that 200,000 hybrids were sold last year.

However, other actions taken by the president and his administration in the past don't coincide with promoting fuel-efficient vehicles. The Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003 gave large tax credits to small businesses that own vehicles greater than 6,000 pounds.

Vehicles under 6,000 pounds qualify for a maximum \$10,710 depreciation value deduction, while those that exceeded 6,000 pounds could get a first-year tax deduction of up to \$100,000.

This meant that a small busi-

ness owner who purchased a luxury sedan for their business could only claim the \$10,710 deduction, while a business owner who purchased a sport utility vehicle, regardless of necessity, would have been able to deduct the full price of the vehicle up to \$100,000.

The tax credit for SUVs was lowered by the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004, which took effect on October 22, 2004. The new limit small business owners that purchase an SUV can qualify for is \$25,000.

A group of protesters, estimated by the West Sacramento Police Department at more than 1,000 people, assembled about 200 yards down the street from the CFCP, angry with the president for what they perceived as a failed war in Iraq and a flawed environmental policy.

After the president departed, a man dropped a backpack in the middle of the crowd. West Sacramento Police arrested the suspect and treated the situation as a bomb threat, though after they destroyed the backpack they concluded it was only a hoax.

Despite a tax break for SUV owners, a refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change during his first year in office and suppression of criticism on administration environmental policies

within the government, Bush was optimistic that his administration has improved the environment during his time in office.

"Air is clearer, water is purer, land is better cared for," he said. "Over the last five years things have improved."

Bush said alternative fuel sources, especially hydrogen, are within the realm of short-term possibilities.

"The idea of a hydrogen powered car is not a foolish dream. It's becoming a reality," he said. "I believe today's children will take their driver's tests in hydrogen cars. We're heading from a hydrocarbon economy to a hydrogen economy."

The hydrogen fuel cell vehicle

uses a storage tank of hydrogen to generate electricity by forcing hydrogen and oxygen atoms to form H<sub>2</sub>O compounds – water. The only emission from the vehicle is steam.

Vehicles running on hydrogen can go twice as far with the same amount of energy as a gas-powered car, and current vehicles have ranges of up to 200 miles before they need to be refueled. Hydrogen stations have been placed across the state, but the prohibitive cost of hydrogen cars is keeping them from becoming a commercial reality. A hydrogen car can cost as much as \$1 million, something the president said is an obstacle the CFCP is trying to overcome.

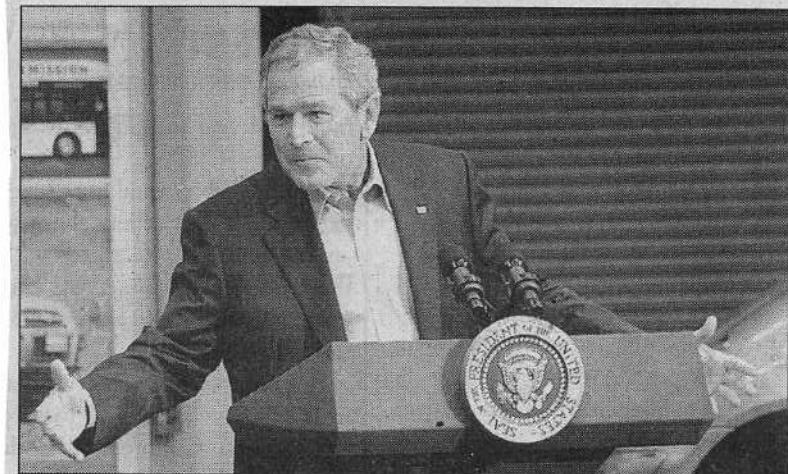
Bush began Earth Day on a bike in the Napa Valley before arriving for a private tour of the fuel partnership in West Sacramento.

"I spent the first part of my day mountain biking. It's a spectacular way to enjoy nature," he said.

Bush drove home his message of eliminating a reliance on foreign oil, noting that America gets much of its oil from "countries that don't particularly care for us."

"We can affect our dependence on oil by encouraging hybrid vehicles," Bush said. "We're innovators and thinkers and we get things done."

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Village Life photo by Wil Morat

**PRESIDENT BUSH ASSURES** people on Earth Day that hydrogen fuel cells are the wave of the future.