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Roadshow highlighting clean energy comes to Columbus

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By Jose Zozaya, Anchor/Reporter CONNECT

COLUMBUS, GA (WTVM) - The discussion at the Clean Energy Roadshow in Columbus focused on changing people's perception on what a car that runs on alternative fuels, anything besides gasoline or diesel, can do.

Industry experts pointed to several vehicles parked in a pavilion outside the Liberty Utilities building, saying this technology can not only have an environmental impact in the community, but also a positive, short-term economic impact.

"Sustainability issues, environmental issues that are there, and then also the price issue," said Chuck Rossi, president of Liberty Utilities. "It's something that has been a long time coming."

The roadshow displayed several kinds of cars already running on alternative fuels used on a daily basis; natural gas powering a fleet of Liberty Utilities' own trucks, propane powering school buses, and even electricity, fueling vehicles people can buy on the market.

Rossi and other experts like Paul Osbourn, national sales manager for Westport Fuel Systems, said some people may hesitate to invest in alternative fuel initially, but they will see the payoff sooner than they think.

Osbourn said the fuel industry has seen a rebound in the demand they're getting from clients and customers wanting an alternative, particularly over the last year, because of two reasons.

"One," he said, "is fuel is coming back up, and then, the emission standards around the country are tightening."

"Gasoline and diesel have ruled [the industry] for years," Rossi said, "but I think now, people are a lot more open today, to some of these alternative fuels...and where the money is working out for them, so they're able to consider it and look at it seriously."

Rossi also said he believes companies and businesses will be the driving force behind a push for more alternative fueling stations, much like, as he put it, the increase in cellphone use led to the construction of more and more cellular towers.

The Clean Energy Roadshow - along with experts leading the technology conversation - will continue making its way across Georgia, stopping in Savannah this Friday.

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