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President Promotes Alternative Energy With a Car Show of Sorts

By [MATTHEW L. WALD](#)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23 — President Bush turned to alternative fuels, and alternative companies, to argue Friday that his goal for reining in gasoline consumption in the coming decade was realistic.

On the South Lawn of the White House, Mr. Bush inspected a version of the [Toyota Prius](#), the popular Japanese gas-electric hybrid, that had been rigged with a Canadian-built battery pack to allow it to operate more of each day on electricity, along with a South Korean sport utility truck modified by a small California company to run entirely on batteries.

Neither is now a mass-market product, but each, the president said, is evidence that entrepreneurs will rush in to solve the nation's oil addiction. He called on Congress to approve financing that he has requested for research.

The administration has set a goal of reducing gasoline consumption within 10 years by 20 percent from current forecasts. The question is, Which technologies will prove viable?

The modified Prius shown Friday carried an extra battery pack in the space intended for the spare tire and had undergone software modification, so that it used more battery power than a standard Prius, reaching higher speeds before starting up the gasoline engine.

Ric Fulop, vice president of A123 Systems of Watertown, Mass., which modified the car, said a battery that would power it for about 40 miles between overnight chargings cost \$10,000 and would last through 7,000 cycles of charging and discharging — “more than the life of the vehicle.”

The electric truck can go 130 miles between chargings, said Bryon Bliss, vice president at Phoenix Motorcars of Ontario, Calif. The company has orders for 75, at \$45,000 each, and hopes to sell 500 this year and 6,000 next year, Mr. Bliss said.

To a repeated question as to whether he would consider one of the vehicles for his ranch in Texas, Mr. Bush simply wished the assembled reporters a good weekend and returned to the Oval Office.

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