

California to spend \$20 million on building part of 'hydrogen highway'

By Marc Lifsher

[Business](#)



Former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger fills up the first hydrogen-powered Hummer in 2004 as then-GM Chairman Bob Lutz looks on at a hydrogen fueling station at Los Angeles International Airport. (Ringo H.W. Chiu / For The Times)

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Part of ex-Gov. Schwarzenegger's vision of a 'hydrogen highway' for non-polluting cars might become a reality California plans to spend \$20 million building dozens of fuel stations across state for powering hydrogen cars
First hearing of state Assembly's new Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee to be live-streamed on Reddit

It's been more than a decade since former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger regularly talked about his dream of building a "hydrogen highway" that would speed fleets of non-polluting cars from Mexico to Canada.

The vision never materialized anywhere other than in the governor's upbeat, eco-friendly speeches.

Now, finally, a modest form of Schwarzenegger's highway might actually become a reality.

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The California Energy Commission reports that it's spending \$20 million to build nearly half of the approximately 100 stations needed to give a driver of a hydrogen car enough range to travel freely through most parts of the Golden State.

So far, only about 10 stations are operational, mostly in the Los Angeles and the San Francisco areas, servicing only a couple of hundred hydrogen-powered cars running statewide. Stations are open in Burbank, Fountain Valley, Irvine, the Harbor City neighborhood of L.A., Newport Beach and Torrance.

Starting in October with a new fuel station in the city of Coalinga, near Interstate 5 in the San Joaquin Valley, hydrogen cars will be able to get from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Such vehicles can go about 300 miles on a fill up.

The current goal, said Energy Commissioner Janea A. Scott, "is to match the number of stations to the number of cars coming in," and then let the market take over.

The key to success, she said, is getting car manufacturers to give more motorists the option of conveniently switching to hydrogen cars that release no carbon dioxide or other pollutants.

Hyundai, Toyota and Honda already have or are planning soon to make hydrogen cars available in dealer showrooms.

"The technology," she said, "is here now."

Ask me anything

The state Assembly's new Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee holds its first meeting Tuesday , and a popular website is getting star billing at the Capitol event.

The hearing will be live-streamed on [Reddit](#), an online forum famous for its "Ask Me Anything" feature. The segment allows participants to pose questions to celebrities, politicians and other public figures.

"I believe in being as accessible as possible," said committee Chairman Mike Gatto (D-Los Angeles).

Rehabilitated?

State pension board member Priya Mathur is out of the doghouse after four months of punishment for repeatedly violating state government ethics rules.

In October, Mathur's colleagues on the board of the California Public Employees' Retirement System in October stripped her of positions as board vice president and chairwoman of the important Health and Benefits Committee.

It was a second public disciplinary action after Mathur paid the state Fair Political Practices Commission a total of \$17,000 in penalties for infractions from 2002 to 2013.

But last week, the board gave her a break. She was elected without opposition as chairwoman of the board's pensions committee. CalPERS declined to comment.

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