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RIT to evaluate county's alternative-fuel vehicles

Joseph Spector
Staff writer

(July 17, 2007) — Monroe County and the Rochester Institute of Technology announced a partnership Monday to study the performance of county vehicles running on alternative fuels.

The county has stepped up efforts in recent years to use vehicles that run on ethanol. The county has 78 hybrid-electric vehicles and E-85 flex-fuel vehicles, which run on 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline.

The partnership will allow RIT's Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies to study the county's "green fleet" to evaluate the environmental and economic impact of the alternative-fuel vehicles and the vehicles' propulsion technologies. The research also will include studying an expansion of the county's alternative energy fleet, ways to increase the amount of biodiesel in county vehicles and long-range outlooks for fuel cells and hydrogen power.

The work will be funded through a \$4 million grant the college received last year from the U.S. Department of Transportation Research and Innovative Technology Administration to study alternative fuels.

RIT President William Destler applauded the partnership and the county's move toward renewable energy.

"It's exactly the kind of example we need the public sector to set for individuals and the commercial sector so we can move forward positively for a more sustainable future," he said.

The county plans to continue to add vehicles that run on alternative energy to its roughly 700-vehicle fleet, said John Graham, the county's director of environmental services.

The county has undertaken a variety of "green" initiatives in recent years, such as a \$9.7 million power plant at the Mill Seat landfill in Riga to turn landfill gas into power. The county plans to open an ethanol service station on Scottsville Road by the end of the year and has been in discussions with the High Falls Brewery to construct a plant that would turn beer waste into ethanol.

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What's next

Monroe County and the Rochester Institute of Technology have agreed to work together to study the effectiveness of the county's use of alternative energy sources to fuel the county's fleet of vehicles.

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