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THURSDAY ADVISORY -- SENATE ENVIRONMENT PANEL TO DISCUSS PACKAGE OF BILLS PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE FUEL CARS

Committee Will Hear Testimony Ranging from Purchasing Incentives to Infrastructure Needs for New Crop of 'Clean Cars'

TRENTON – The Senate Environment and Energy Committee will host a hearing on a package of more than twenty bills promoting the use of electric, hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles on Thursday, September 20. The hearing will be held at 10 AM in Committee Room 10, 3rd Floor of the Statehouse Annex.

“With the nation’s third highest commuter times, New Jerseyans spend a lot of time in their cars, much to the detriment of our state’s air quality, the health of our citizens and the environment,” said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, Chairman of the Environment Committee and author of numerous bills included in the package. “As technology continues to advance and we have the ability to fuel our cars with natural gas, electricity and even fuel cells rather than with gasoline, it is important that the Legislature revisits ways to encourage consumers to switch to these alternative fuel vehicles.”

The bipartisan bills range from providing tax incentives for residents who purchase alternative fuel vehicles to addressing infrastructure needs such as the installation of public electric and compressed natural gas fueling stations throughout the state. The package includes bills to encourage the state, localities and school districts to purchase alternative fuel cars and school buses and a bill to promote community college training programs on car conversion.

According to the US Department of Energy, as of August 31, 2012, New Jersey ranks 26th in the nation in the number of both public and private alternative-fuel pumps installed, with 48 public electric charging stations and 5 public compressed natural gas stations.

“With more and more alternative fuel vehicles hitting the roads with electric and compressed natural gas power, the public will have greater access to these low and zero emission vehicles. It is therefore essential that we take a look at the infrastructure needs to accommodate them,” said Senator Greenstein, D-Middlesex and Mercer, Vice-Chair of the Committee and sponsor of seven of the bills being discussed on Thursday. “Some localities such as Montclair are already taking the lead in installing charging stations, but much more needs to be done. This bill package will not only look at where and how to increase access to these stations but also how to encourage individuals and entities to purchase these vehicles.”

Senator Smith noted that the goal of Thursday’s Committee hearing is to hear testimony on the bill package, to narrow the list of bills to be reviewed during an October session of the Environment and Energy Committee and to vote on the package at a later committee hearing.

While most of the bill package will be for discussion only, the Committee is scheduled to vote on S-2196, sponsored by Senator Smith, that would establish a Clean Car Commission to review the state’s implementation of the California Low Emission Vehicle program and to suggest incentives to encourage the purchase of and the infrastructure needs for low and zero emission vehicles. Senator Smith noted that without strictly reviewing and enforcing our state’s emission standards and without incentives for New Jersey residents to purchase low and zero emission vehicles, the state will continue to have unhealthy air quality, creating a risk to the health and well-being of future generations.