Going Green by Car

By Paul Tick

Many co-oppers are looking for ways to protect the environment and save energy. Many are concerned that the car they drive is not efficient enough and they need to get rid of it and get a Toyota Prius, the hybrid and most efficient of the mass produced cars. Yet, not everyone has the money to buy a Prius and there have been news reports that the Prius is not as green as we thought. Among the noted concerns were that the electric batteries on which the car depends do not last and that owners get stuck with thousands of dollars in bills for new batteries. Other reports state that it takes more energy to produce this car than a Hummer will use over its lifetime. Well, should you ditch your plans for a hybrid, should you keep your current car? What is a co-opper to do?

The Sierra Club points out that the concerns about the Prius are simply “urban legends.” Some of the anti-Prius information comes from a marketing company study whose research was not scientifically reviewed. George Will, the very conservative writer who is syndicated in 450 papers, even wrote an article called "Use a Hummer to Crush a Prius." In it he made space to trash Ben and Jerry’s and the Kyoto climate agreements. With the use of simple math (or not so simple for some of us), the Sierra Club disproved the arguments against the Prius. The club showed that if the arguments were true, than the Prius would be so expensive that Toyota could not possibly afford to manufacture it. The Union of Concerned Scientists' states that the “…study has been completely contradicted by scientific studies from MIT, Argonne National Laboratory, and Carnegie Mellon's Lifecycle Assessment Group. The reality is that the Prius “…can significantly cut global-warming pollution, reduce energy use, and save drivers thousands at the pump."

Some reports flag the nickel metal hydride battery of the Prius as a major environmental hazard but these reports too are highly exaggerated. The

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Sierra Club points out that these reports "…describe the nickel mining industry of Canada from 30 years ago, not of today." Each Prius battery contain 32 pounds of nickel and the total nickel required by all the Prius being made are only a fraction of the world's supply of nickel. The batteries for the over one million Prius' manufactured thus far, used only one percent of the world's annual nickel-mining production. Further, about 80 percent of all used nickel is recycled. Used Prius batteries are recycled by Toyota and to encourage recycling, the company gives owners $150 for each battery returned. The Toyota battery has a 100,000 mile warranty is expected to last for at least 180,000 miles and so there is no worry that these will suddenly go dead on the owners.

So, should we each run out and get a Prius? Well, it depends? According to the American Council of an Energy Efficient Economy's Greenercars.org, the Prius is the greenest car of all. While its cost is lower than most cars on the market, it is still, a bit pricy for others. Some simply want to buy a used car as an important form of reducing, reusing and recycling. For them, finding a high quality, high miles-per-gallon used car such as a Civic or Corolla may be the best bet. Others who want a new car but one that is less expensive than the Prius can look at the Fit or the Smart Car. Others, with some mechanical ingenuity may want to convert their car to one that runs on recycling cooking oil.

No matter what you decide, most important of all is that you walk, use mass transit, bike ride and car pool as much as possible and use you car only when absolutely necessary. Think of the environment before any travel and think locally when making purchases and when vacationing. Enjoy the local scene and realize how much we have close at hand.

No matter what car you end up in, using it efficiently is most important. For tips on efficient driving go to:
http://www.eartheasy.com/live_fuel_efficient_driving.htm

To find ratings on most efficient cars, go to:
http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/cars/new-cars/buying-advice/most-fuelefficient-cars-206/index.htm

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http://www.salon.com/env/good_life/2008/08/13/grease_car/

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