



## A Factory Where Clean Vehicles, Public Transit, and Economic Growth Converge

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In his State of the Union address and his federal budget, President Obama championed incentives for cleaner vehicles, expanded public transit, and more American jobs. A couple of weeks ago, I saw one of the places where all three of these economic boosters converge: a hybrid bus company called ISE based in San Diego.

With 60 employees and contracts with cities around the country, ISE is already making impressive advances in building more fuel efficient city buses. But with the right policies in place, ISE and many other American companies are poised to bring clean energy technology into the mainstream--along with the thousands of jobs, reduced oil dependence, and cleaner air that come with it.

After participating in countless meetings about energy policy, I welcomed the chance to see clean vehicles on the ground. I got to kick the tires of a bus whose body was built outside of Oakland then brought to San Diego to be combined with ISE's gasoline hybrid electric propulsion system. I got to sit behind the wheel--although not drive--a diesel hybrid electric bus. And I got to travel around in a fuel cell bus, a remarkably quiet, smooth ride made even better by the realization that it releases zero pollution.

I also got to hold in my hand an ultra capacitor, or, in layperson's terms, a very advanced battery for hybrid engines. It was only about the size of a soda can, but it is a hot topic in the vehicle sector right now. These batteries are viewed as a bottle neck for producing more hybrids in the United States. To build hundreds of thousands of hybrid cars and buses, you want to have a battery supplier right here in America, not in Asia.

In his State of the Union address, Obama noted that Korea is making most of the batteries for new plug-in hybrids right now. The economic stimulus package even included \$2 billion for car batteries in an effort to draw the emerging industry to America. ISE is already part of the solution. It is an American-based company using the technology of another American-based company, Maxwell, to put these batteries in their American-made vehicles.



Standing in the lot of ISE, I felt like the clean vehicle future is no longer off in the distance; it is right around the corner. Here is a picture of ISE board member David Goodman, NRDC vehicles expert Roland Hwang, and me standing in front of the first 60-foot articulated bus in the United States (most city buses are 40 feet). It uses a highly efficient ISE diesel hybrid electric propulsion system.

This bus is called a BRT (bus rapid transit) because it looks like a bullet train on wheels. The bus looked and felt very modern. But the best thing about it is that it isn't on the drawing board. It was right here on the lot, 1 of 50 that ISE is making for the City of Las Vegas this year.

The key to making that number--the number of clean, low-emission buses-- grow exponentially is smart policies that expand the market. The stimulus package and the federal budget are a good start. I hope to also see more cities issuing procurement rules that call for hybrid vehicles and more factories on American soil to fill the battery supply chain. Because as the market expands, so do the American jobs and the environmental benefits. Talk about a good ride.