

John Berner
Discussion Panel Review on Fuel Economy
TRANS-204 Energy
01/02/04

Two of the three groups which presented cases on whether there should be increased fuel economy standards focused on SUV's. The auto industry is beating the system by making modifications to cars so that they meet the standards of SUV's and trucks. From the side of economists, this doesn't help our pollution control, because more and more cars will be less efficient.

Hybrid vehicles, which use an electric motor to reach a certain speed before a gasoline engine kicks in is an improvement which was discussed to appeal to the economists. Much fuel is wasted leaving a car sit at idle and in trying to pick up speed.

A couple of the groups had brought up policies that presidential candidates would like to see met. From what I recall, both groups only voiced one politician's goal, but two politicians were voiced. Goals to meet 30 to 40 miles to the gallon seemed to be what the government would like to see happen.

Diesel engines on semi tractors and their inefficiency was also discussed as being low, but the main focus of the presentation was fuel efficiency with smaller personal vehicles. Vehicles in Canada are switching to propane, and I didn't hear anything come up on that topic.

One group stated that many people don't even pay as much attention to fuel economy as they do with the style and purpose they want. Economists need to do more to make people aware of the decisions they make.