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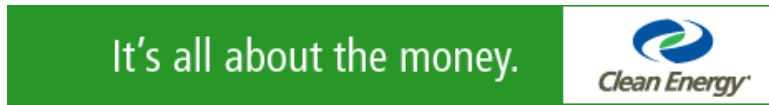
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PREMIUM CONTENT

## Alternative Fuels Use to Rise After 2010 Change, Graves Says

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*By Rip Watson, Senior Reporter*

This story appears in the Sept. 22 print edition of Transport Topics.

If you think the Environmental Protection Agency's 2010 engine requirements will be the ultimate technological test for fleets, American Trucking Associations President Bill Graves has a message for you: There's more to come.

As industry leaders plan to gather in New Orleans next month for ATA's Management Conference & Exhibition, Graves told Transport Topics another key issue — alternative fuels — soon will be taking center stage.

"We're at the beginning of a significant transitional phase on how trucks are powered and what fuel is used to produce that power," Graves said.

"Our industry . . . will have a vested interest in wanting to weigh in on what technology choices and energy choices seem to serve us best as we transition away from being strictly diesel-powered vehicles," Graves said. "That's a big, big, big deal."

Consider that motor carriers are expected to spend \$163.4 billion on fuel this year, according to ATA.

With that much money at stake and truckers struggling daily with near-record diesel costs, manufacturers and fleets already are turning attention to developing alternative fuel vehicles.

Kenworth Truck Co. and Sterling Trucks have liquefied natural-gas powertrains in production. Peterbilt Motors plans to introduce a Class 8 liquefied natural gas-powered tractor next year. Volvo AB is seeking to develop a hybrid over-the-road Class 8 truck and will begin production in 2010 of a vocational tractor.

At the same time, a broad range of other options to consider includes compressed natural gas, biodiesel and renewable diesel, dimethyl ether (an ethanol-methanol blend), fuel cells and electricity.

"It's pretty clear we're starting a transition to something where, 25 years from now, that will look very different," Graves said.

"Right now, you get in your truck. and you go to any truck stop across the nation, and there's a pump that puts out diesel fuel, and you put it into your engine and you go," Graves said. "Now, you've got T. Boone Pickens [who] wants to do solar and natural gas, and you've got hydrogen fuel cells; you've got electric."

While Pickens, the billionaire who made his money finding oil, and others are advancing their national agenda, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach also are encouraging alternative fuels.

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Knight Transportation has said it will order LNG trucks to power part of its port drayage fleet in California. At the same time, the two ports offered incentives covering nearly 90% of the purchase price to owner-operators who buy LNG-powered vehicles to supplement a small group in service now.

The new technology is part of the ports' Clean Trucks Plans to reduce pollution in the region.

And California state Sen. Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach) is pushing for electric trucks on the docks.

As the first wave of alternative-fueled trucks enters service, regulators and the industry will have to wrestle with many issues.

"Government will probably be called on to pick some [technology] winners and some losers," Graves said. "We're going to want to have some say in where they go with that."

"I imagine most of our fleets would not like a scenario where they are buying something that is powered by one source for this company and then go buy something powered by a different source from another."

Fueling stations will be an issue, as well.

"We're in interstate commerce, we have to have a consistent grid of fueling stations across the country," Graves said. "We have to have consistent quality of the energy that we consume. We have to have fairly priced energy that we consume. That's a huge challenge for us."

He warned, however, that if the federal government doesn't act, state officials will not hesitate to impose their own rules, presenting another complication.

"We need a certain sense of connectivity, of consistency state to state and I think every day we're seeing it's harder and harder to hold that consistent landscape together because of the activism we see across the country," Graves said.

"A patchwork of laws and regulation state by state is very bad for the U.S. economy," he noted, because it makes the nation as a whole less competitive, compared with the rest of the world's economies.

One positive sign for the future is the way the preparation for the 2010 engine rules has been handled by an industry, compared with the actions in advance of 2007 standards.

"The OEMs and the engine manufactures have all done a very good job of planning for this rollout," Graves said. "I don't think there's the same level of apprehension about 2010. There's not nearly the sense of uncertainty" that there was leading to 2007.

Whatever the future holds, Graves said that he believes trucking has made strong progress on operating in an environmentally sustainable way.

"We certainly have made a very positive impact in the way many people think about our industry, certainly about this association and the commitments we made in the area of sustainability," he said.

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