

Obama's Clean Cities Bombshell:

President's Budget Would Alter Basic Character of Grant Program

By Sam Spofforth, Executive Director

Buried within President Obama's 2011 budget request to Congress is a provision that could change the essential character of the Department of Energy's Clean Cities program – a program vital to Clean Fuels Ohio's work. The President proposes an increase in the Clean Cities budget from \$25 million to \$35 million. So far so good. However, the Administration earmarks \$20 million of that exclusively to grants for electric vehicles and other EV-related projects and activities.

(Here is a link to the DOE FY 2011 budget

<http://www.mbe.doe.gov/budget/11budget/Content/Volume%203.pdf>

The clean cities budget is on pages 291 and 292, or pages 297 and 298 if you click in the appropriate box in the PDF.)

This is a bad idea. Clean Fuels Ohio supports electric vehicle and charging system deployments. Electric vehicles are among the most promising technology choices to help achieve significant reductions in petroleum dependence over the next 10 to 20 years. Nearly \$3 million of our \$11 million Clean Cities stimulus grant is devoted to EV and charging system deployments. We're working to develop a broad partnership to focus on policy, education, training and deployment activities for EVs in Ohio. We are also an affiliate member of The Ohio State University's Smart@CAR program, which is taking on exciting R&D, field testing and other activities related to EVs.

However, the Clean Cities program has never been focused on any one particular technology. The fundamental strength of the program always has been its diversity and fuel/technology neutrality – an approach that Clean Fuels Ohio has always fully embraced with great success.

Over years of experience, we and other coalitions have learned that the most effective way to develop projects is to approach business and government fleets with respect and an open mind, work to understand their situation and goals, educate them about a variety of options, then collaborate to develop and help implement (often multiple) strategies that fit best. This approach, as it relates to the federal Clean Cities grant program, is in jeopardy.

The Obama Administration has come to admire the Clean Cities program. In providing \$300 million in stimulus funding, they have rightly seen it as a means of helping transform our transportation energy system. They now want to use it as a tool to advance their transportation technology strategy, which is heavily weighted toward EVs. Unfortunately, they seem not to understand what they admire. In using the program to advance a hand-picked winner, they would undermine the core nature of the program's effectiveness.

For the past ten years and beyond, we've seen this tendency, especially in Washington, to fixate on one particular fuel or vehicle technology as THE answer to petroleum dependence. In the 1990s, this was electric vehicles and natural gas. In 2001, it became hydrogen. By 2006, it was biofuels, especially ethanol. Now, for some, THE answer is electric vehicles. However, each of these fuels and technologies have unique strengths and weaknesses. Some work well with certain applications, places, and people but not others. All have developed over time and will likely continue but we can't predict exactly how and when. Clean Cities recognizes these nuances and is not discouraged as we sometimes take two

steps forward and one back or sideways before moving forward again.

Clean Fuels Ohio supports the increased appropriations request for Clean Cities. However, we oppose this proposed budget earmark for one technology. We will ask our Congressional representatives in Ohio, particularly those on the House and Senate Appropriations Committee, to remove the earmark from the budget.

We will continue to work aggressively to advance electric vehicles and infrastructure in Ohio, along with biodiesel, propane, natural gas, E85, hybrids, hydrogen, idling reduction, transit, and other fuels, technologies and strategies. All of these choices are valuable in one way or another in reducing petroleum dependence in order to support Ohio's economy, create jobs, curb climate change, improve air quality and health, and increase energy security.

Sam Spofforth

Executive Director

Clean Fuels Ohio

3400 N. High Street, Suite 430

Columbus, OH 43202

(614) 884-7336

sam@cleanfuelsohio.org