



## Overview

The City of Athens, like most other local governments, has been hit hard by the rising cost of fuel for everything from police cars to garbage trucks. In 2008, Athens Gas Department Manager Steve Carter approached the city about converting its larger fleet vehicles to CNG. Carter was convinced CNG would save the city money. "Compressed natural gas is cheaper than gasoline and diesel, and it is a cleaner fuel, which means less maintenance," Carter said. To date the city has purchased or converted a total of 13 vehicles that are operated or can be operated on CNG, and currently has three more on order.

## Program Participation

Carter proposed that the city build a public access fast fill CNG station as well as two time-fill dispensers to fuel city vehicles at Public Works and "Leak City," the utilities training site. The \$614,360 proposal to construct the infrastructure was funded by the Athens Gas Department and received approval of Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks, Athens Utilities General Manager Gary Scroggins and the Athens City Council.

The public access station opened in September 2013 and serves the city's fueling needs and those of commercial fleets and motorists in the area as well as traveling on Interstate 65. Phoenix Energy Corp., an Alabama Company, built the station and converted the vehicles.

## Results

For taxpayers, Athens' use of CNG will mean significant savings for the city in fuel costs and also vehicle maintenance costs. In just one example, Fire Chief Tony Kirk has reported spending just 12 cents per mile on average for his CNG vehicle versus 23 cents per mile on gasoline-operated vehicles. Fleets and consumers using the fast fill public access station also save at the pump. As of May 2014, CNG is priced at just \$1.89 per gasoline gallon equivalent.



*The City of Athens has built the first CNG station on the Interstate 65 corridor between Nashville and Birmingham*



## Fleet Facts

### Organization:

City of Athens & Athens Gas Department (AL)

### Mayor, City of Athens:

Ronnie Marks

### Industry Type:

Government

### Conversions Began:

2012

### Vehicles Converted:

13

### Estimated Annual CNG usage:

55,000 GGEs

### Estimated Annual Fuel Cost Savings Approximately:

\$95,000

### CNG Fueling Infrastructure:

Public station fast fill fueling and Athens Gas Department time fill

The benefits go beyond dollars and cents. Athens' leaders also have the satisfaction of knowing they are using fuel that promotes a cleaner environment, domestic jobs and greater energy independence. "The Athens Gas Department, Mayor Ronnie Marks and the Athens City Council are leading the way in North Alabama with regards to green energy and independence from foreign oil for the city's energy needs," Carter said. The city's efforts have received positive attention in the press and from organizations such as the Alabama League of Municipalities, which honored Athens with a Quality of Life Award. "We are excited to be recognized by the League of Municipalities," Mayor Marks said. "To receive such an award validates the great work that is being done in our community with CNG."

"Athens has demonstrated how cities can promote the use of alternative fuels and reap benefits within their own communities and beyond. The leadership demonstrated in Athens is worthy of recognition," said Mark Bentley, Executive Director of the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, a U. S. Department of Energy designated Clean Cities coalition serving Alabama.

## Lessons Learned and Next Steps

The City of Athens believes there are viable alternative fuel options available today for fleets of all sizes; compressed natural gas just happened to be the best fit for them. Also, large fleet vehicles can help pay for a fast-fill CNG station. Once a fast-fill station is complete, the remainder of the fleet can benefit. Furthermore, Marks found the CNG industry to be very welcoming. Station operators, fleet owners, private companies involved with CNG, and even individual CNG drivers have been very helpful. Athens found people in this industry to be passionate about alternative fuels and were very willing to help.

The City of Athens has committed to adding CNG vehicles to the fleet as older vehicles are retired. This makes financial sense for taxpayers and ratepayers, but at the same time they are leading by example. Their hope is to see more area fleets use compressed natural gas.



For more information on this and other alternative fuel and advanced technology vehicle programs contact Mark Bentley, Executive Director at the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, by phone: 205.402.2755 or via email at [mark@alabamacleanfuels.org](mailto:mark@alabamacleanfuels.org). ACFC is a designated Clean Cities Coalition by the U.S. Department of Energy.

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