

JOHN DAVIS: Now let's check in with Yolanda Vazquez and all the latest motor news.

YOLANDA VAZQUEZ: Despite all the encouraging news about alternative fuels and electric cars these days, most consumers are still taking a wait & see attitude. But when it comes to some government and commercial fleets, it's full speed ahead.

While speed isn't really the issue, it was still fitting that the Indianapolis Motor Speedway was selected as the venue for the U.S. Department of Energy's 2011 Clean Cities Stakeholder Summit. Much of today's automotive technology sprang from the fabled Indianapolis 500 auto race.

And as a caravan of new-age alternative fuel vehicles made their way around the two-and-a-half mile track, it's clear that efficient driving is no stranger here.

Seven time Indy 500 competitor Lyn Saint James set the pace for the event.

LYNN ST. JAMES: Well you know, people think that race car drivers only like to go fast, and that is one of the most important things. But y'know you really feel the car, you really have to understand all the mechanics to the car, you have to feel the car. And one of those is essentially fuel economy. Every race, professionally at least, in NASCAR or any car, you are given a prescribed amount of fuel. You only get X amount of fuel for every race. And so you can't just use it all up and not be able to finish the race.

YOLANDA VAZQUEZ: But just like winning at Indy, reducing our national appetite for oil won't be easy. Assistant Energy Secretary David Sandalow understands the challenge.

DAVID SANDALOW: But let's be clear, we have a long ways to go. Still today, 94 percent, 95 percent of the energy to move our cars and trucks is one fuel, petroleum. That needs to change. We need to diversify the fuel mix in our vehicles so that American drivers can choose when gasoline prices get high.

YOLANDA VAZQUEZ: Government and commercial fleets are currently in the pole positions for the race to improve fuel economy and the clean the environment with alternative fuels. But reducing total vehicle operating costs is also a goal. For companies looking to improve their bottom line, the available tax incentives and lower fuel costs these options offer are just as important as societal benefits. The gathering gave members of the Clean Cities Coalitions and their Clean Fleet partners a chance to try out some of the latest in alternative fuel vehicles of all shapes and sizes.

The widest possible array of no-compromise, alt-fuel vehicles will be the key to speeding up individual consumer acceptance, and to any real chance of America

reducing our dependence on imported oil. But, the DOE's Patrick Davis thinks many of the vehicles will share a common thread.

PATRICK DAVIS: When you look at technologies that both greatly or dramatically reduce petroleum consumption, while simultaneously greatly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, they all have some form of electric drive in them. Whether that's a plug-in vehicle running on a E85, whether that's a full-electric, whether that's a fuel cell vehicle, they all have some part of electric drive as part of that vehicle.

YOLANDA VAZQUEZ: For 100 years the Indianapolis Motor Speedway has been the home of the world's best known auto race. This day, the track was the backdrop for a race involving the future of transportation that America must win.

And, that's the latest from Indy for this week's MotorNews.