

Truckin' past the pump

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Think you have to pay five figures to drive a fuel-efficient car? Think again.

A Wake Forest company offers a less-expensive solution it says will improve engine performance, increase gas mileage and reduce carbon emissions.

"We were birthed out of the need for energy-saving options," said Drew Graham, a representative of Creative Hybrid Solutions. "We were all products of layoffs and decided to create something on our own."

The solution is simple. The company installs three sets of magnets to a car's coolant, air and fuel lines. The magnets are supposed to alter the molecular structure of each element, allowing each line to run more efficiently and with less build-up.

"We encounter a lot of skepticism," Graham admits. "When people think *hybrid*, they think *battery*. But you can't take the family to the mountains on a battery charge."

The Vortex fuel system, three strings of magnets, installs on a vehicle in less than 30 minutes. The devices can be removed from one vehicle and installed on another at any time.

And, "It doesn't void a car warranty," Graham adds. "Once you put it on, you never have to touch it."

The biggest impact on a vehicle is the reduction of emis-

sions and wasted gas, Graham said. About 45 percent of gas is typically used in the car, Graham said. But 55 percent of unused gas comes out through the tailpipe. The Vortex fuel saver is designed to help cars burn gas more efficiently.

Prior to installing the system on Linda Leggit's 2003 Chevrolet Trail Blazer, Graham performed an emissions test. Minutes after installing the strings of magnets, he performed a second test to show her the immediate results.

Before the installation, Leggit's car averaged 15.3 percent carbon dioxide emissions. Less than five minutes after installation, the carbon dioxide emissions dropped to 12.4 percent. Her hydrocarbon emissions prior to installation averaged 18 parts per million. After installation — she had zero hydrocarbon emissions.

To see the system's full results will take five to seven tanks of gas.

"Everybody's a critic

until they get one on their car," said Graham.

Derek Franker of Wake Forest was one of the critics. But Graham was confident enough to put his money where his mouth is. "Drew let me try one and see it for myself for free," said Franker. "The results were obvious in the first three tanks of gas."

Franker said his 1998 Jeep Cherokee previously got 15 miles per gallon in the city and 20 miles on the highway. He now gets 24 mpg in the city and 35.5 mpg on the highway.

"I'm absolutely a happy cus-

tommer," said Franker. "I was spending about \$160 a month in gas, and that's not the case anymore."

Though the company is the only one of its kind in North Carolina, Raleigh and Wake County leaders are taking notice.

Creative Hybrid Solutions has outfitted the Vortex fuel system on two Raleigh police cars and 163 Wake County school buses for a 120-day free trial.

It was an offer Raleigh couldn't refuse.

"It's free and we don't have anything to lose," said Travis Brown, superintendent of Raleigh's vehicle fleet services. "If it works, it could save us a lot of money."

While the test still has 90 days to go, Graham reports fuel efficiency has increased in police cars by 40 percent and buses have registered a 21 percent increase.

Brown hasn't looked at the system's progress yet. He is waiting until the free trial ends to see the potential savings.

"We haven't told our drivers about this; we don't want them to change their driving habits. But at the end of the trial, we'll see if we can recoup the costs in our fuel savings."

The science behind the product is fairly new. Controlled testing on the magnets have not been held since the 1970s.

Because no formal tests have been conducted in recent years, Graham said, the company is often asked to put critics' concerns to rest. "People refuse to believe that technology has changed since the 1970s. But we can prove them wrong again and again," he said.

For Leggit, the decision



to purchase a system for her SUV was easy. "We want to go green. But we have a family car and we like the comforts that come with it," she said. "This is a way for us to keep our car, save on fuel and lower our emissions."

For Graham, starting a needed service during a slow economy has Creative Hybrid Solutions revved-up about its product.

"I love my job," said Graham. "We've outfitted cars that now get better gas mileage than a hybrid at a much lower cost."

For more information, go to creativehybridsolutions.com.