

The Oil Drum: Campfire

Discussions about Energy and Our Future

Ten Ways to Cut Oil Use

Posted by [Gail the Actuary](#) on May 27, 2010 - 9:27am in [The Oil Drum: Campfire](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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Grist has come up with a list of 10 ways to reduce oil use, in an article they call [10 ways to kick the offshore-oil habit](#). In this post, I list these approaches and offer a few questions for discussion. Thanks to [Jason Bradford](#) of The Oil Drum staff for pointing out this article.

The approaches suggested by Grist are as follows:

Ten Approaches

- 1. A better "cash for clunkers" program.** A two year plan that gives credit for only replacement vehicles with 35 miles per gallon efficiency or greater is suggested. This program would be paid for by extending the 1978 gas guzzler tax to cars and trucks.
- 2. Emergency funding for endangered mass transit.** The article notes that [59% of public transit networks](#) have cut service, raised fares, or both since January 2009. More federal funding could help this situation.
- 3. A national telecommuting and videoconferencing initiative.** Federal employees should be directed to do these as much as possible. "For everyone else, a campaign would make these more normative and socially acceptable."
- 4. Smarter freight movement.** Grist suggests that Congress commission a study of methods to make trucking, rail and jet transport more efficient, including approaches to improve milage and ways to reduce empty travel of vehicles.
- 5. Smarter land use.** Grist suggests that Congress could direct (and help fund) efforts to update zoning and land use regulations, to encourage more compact development.
- 6. Smarter travel through IT.** Grist recommends a national study, noting that UPS saved 3 million gallons of fuel in a year, by equipping its trucks with software that allowed them to map out routes that avoided left-hand turns. Also, traffic lights could be timed better.
- 7. Educating drivers.** Drivers ed programs and other outreach programs might teach the importance of slower acceleration and maintaining tire pressure for getting good gas mileage.
- 8. A resolution saying efficiency is a new national priority.** Congress should pass a resolution on the importance of efficiency, and tell government agencies to improve efficiency. Funding for new projects might also depend on efficiency.
- 9. Prizes for tech breakthroughs.** A prize is now awarded for 100 mph vehicle. Similar prizes

10. Efficiency "visibility." Congress should fund the development of a National Energy Efficiency Data Center (NEEDC), which would study efficiency technologies.

Questions

1. Which of these seem to have the greatest possibility of fuel savings--over the short term? Over the long term?
2. Which approaches are truly low cost?
3. Historically, Greater efficiency -> More utilization of energy devices -> More fuel use (and economic growth).

Presumably, the authors want

Greater efficiency -> Same utilization of energy devices -> Less fuel use (but not much economic decline)

Or even:

Greater efficiency --> Lower utilization of energy devices --> Much less fuel use (and not much economic decline)

How does one arrange for one of these two latter outcomes to happen? One would think that if fuel is becoming more and more expensive relative to people's income, one of these latter outcomes might happen. Or if fuel is less available, fuel use may decline, in spite of energy efficiency. These may happen naturally, as oil becomes less available.

4. How big a dent do you think we can make in "kicking the offshore oil habit" with these approaches? (US onshore crude oil production is about 3.4 million barrels a day. US offshore crude oil production is about 2.0 million barrels a day. US use of oil products (including imports) is about 19 million barrels a day.)



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