Alternative Transportation Fuels Coalition
Meeting Notes
September 17, 2026

In attendance: Skip Hires, Brian Burrow, Christian Bigger, Steven Polunsky, Logan Callen, Jami Hayes, Michael Redlinger, Jason Lien

- Agenda Item 1 – Announcements & Coordination
  - The meeting opened with introductions, then Jason reviewed a few items:
    - The US Congress is working through reauthorization of the federal transportation bill. The IIJA expires on 9/30/26 but has been extended to 12/11 while the new bill continues to be shaped.
    - WAZIP – WA Zero-Emission Incentive Program—Led by WSDOT, it is a point-of-sale discount program for purchase of med/heavy-duty zero-emission vehicles. Program launched in April and still has funding available in certain vehicle classes.
    - WSDOT continues to work on the round 2 solicitation for the federal NEVI program. This is targeted for projects that install EV charging equipment along select alternative fuel corridors across the state. The round 2 RFP process timeline is still pending.
    - Grant opportunity available for the WA State Diesel Reduction Program through Dept of Ecology. Funding is available for med/heavy-duty fleet transitions. Applications opened 9/8/26 and due by 12/10/26.
      - A question was asked about the impact to diesel mechanics. Others noted that the transition is gradual and fleets still have both diesel and alternative fuel vehicles. The next generation of mechanics are being trained in battery electric motors and other new technologies, though shortages of skilled workers exist. The WA Dept of Commerce aims to address this gap by providing funding for training/workforce development.
- Agenda Item 2 – Discussion – Fossil Fuel Price Dynamics
  - Jason opened with information about the volatility of fossil fuel markets, with focus on diesel fuels. He noted multiple factors impacting the market:
    - Ongoing geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East and Russia have disrupted production and supply, and both regions are heavy exporters of diesel.
    - The Strait of Hormuz is one issue, though Iran and proxies have inflicted damage to refining and pipeline infrastructure in the Gulf States. In Russia, repeated Ukrainian drone attacks have damaged refining facilities. Economic sanctions also constrict Russian exports.

        - In Asia, China limited exports of fossil fuels to protect its own supply over the first several months of this year. This was in reaction to the Iran conflict and further constrained global supply.
        - All these factors have spiked conventional fuel prices, diesel in particular, which has highly inelastic demand—freight, shipping, construction, and agricultural industries cannot easily switch to something else. Price volatility can spur innovation for alternatives. How will the market respond?
        - Alternative fuels are price competitive given sustained high prices for conventional fuels and no real end in sight. STA noted a significant price advantage to operate its battery electric buses vs diesel. City of Spokane has mitigated some of the diesel price upheaval with CNG-powered garbage trucks.
        - With the energy utility market regulated and much more stable over time, the economic case for electric transportation is strong, with an operating cost equivalent that is significantly lower. It also fosters energy independence.
- Agenda Item 3 – Next Meeting
    - An upcoming event is the **4th Annual Regional Transportation Summit** put on by SRTC and GSI, taking place on 10/15 from 8am to 10am at the Centennial Hotel in Spokane. Tickets are available for this breakfast event; the program will focus on how we fund transportation infrastructure.
    - The next Coalition meeting will be set for 11/19 to close out the year. A guest speaker is planned from WA Dept of Ecology to discuss the Clean Fuel Standard.
    - The meeting ended at 3:50pm.