Alternatives researched to head off fuel costs

Electric car, energy audit among experiments

By Chad Lawhorn
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At Kansas University — like most everywhere else — there's a fair amount of head-scratching going on about rising fuel prices.

One department, though, worries a little less than the others. KU’s Networking and Telecommunications Services Department became the university's first department to buy a fully electric car in an attempt to battle skyrocketing gasoline prices.

"So far, it is going great," said Anna Hines, associate director for the department.

The department bought the vehicle in the spring, and one of its maintenance technicians uses it to travel from campus building to campus building.

"You can't beat it for people movers and for small needs," Hines said of the Global Electric Motorcar that the department bought for approximately $10,000.

The lightweight vehicle — the department chains it down each night so students aren't tempted to pick it up and carry it away — has two seats and a built-in tool box.

Hines has been showing off the vehicle elsewhere on campus, such as the police and parking departments, who might have some uses for similar electric cars.

"I think there is plenty of interest on campus about it," Hines said. "I think everybody is still wondering how it will get around on ice and snow."

Hines said that could be a problem, but for the limited amount of time there's ice and snow on the roads, she said her department could use one of the traditional gasoline vehicles it still has.

Lindy Eakin, the university's vice provost for administration and finance, is watching the electric car experiment with interest. Eakin is the KU employee who sees most of the university's fuel bills.

KU buys approximately 140,000 gallons of gasoline per year for its motor pool, which provides gasoline to all the maintenance vehicles, and also sells gasoline to the various KU departments that have vehicles.

"We're starting to hear more interest in alternative fuel vehicles," Eakin said.

That's because fuel prices are beginning to cut into the budgets of several departments, meaning they have to cut back on other things in order to pay the fuel bill.

Thus far, Eakin said the rising fuel prices haven't created any budget crises for departments.

"We haven't heard of serious problems at the administrative level yet," Eakin said. "We haven't heard the police say, 'We need a budget supplement or else we're going to have to cut down on some of our patrols.'"

But that day could come. For every dollar that fuel prices increase, KU's cost go up by $140,000 per year.

"That's significant, but right now it is dwarfed by the increases KU is paying for electricity and natural gas to heat and cool its buildings, Eakin said.

"We've seen a significant impact on our utility budget," Eakin said.

KU's annual electric bill has grown by about $400,000 over the last three years. The natural gas bill has grown by about $1 million over that same time period, Eakin said.

Eakin said KU already has participated in an energy audit to help reduce energy usage. On the fuel side, KU employees are being reminded to be wise in their vehicle usage.

Steve Green, associate director of facilities for KU, said crews are reminded to plan ahead so that they have all the tools and materials needed in their trucks to cut down on trips from a job site to the shop.

But Green also said there's lots of driving his department workers do that is unavoidable because more and more of the Facilities Department's shops are on West Campus, while most of the work remains on the main campus.

"That means at a time when we should be saving fuel, we're forced to do more driving," Green said.

— Staff writer Chad Lawhorn can be reached at 832-6362.
THE GEM CAR has three available speeds: high, low and reverse. Lambert says the vehicle tops out with a high speed of 26 mph.

STEVE LAMBERT, a manager for installation and maintenance at Kansas University, is pictured within the cab of a fully electric GEM (Global Electric Motorcar) that he uses to travel to different campus sites during his workday. The lightweight vehicle, which cost $10,000, is one way KU is trying to reduce its reliance on increasingly pricey gasoline.
Emergency notification system to be launched

Kansas University administrators are confident students, faculty and staff will be able to receive emergency text messages starting this month. "We're still very focused on being functional for the fall semester," said Marlesa Roney, KU vice provost for student success, said in July.

The notification system has been a priority for KU after April's Virginia Tech shootings and Douglas County bomb threats.

University leaders have reviewed several notification products and were close to making a selection in mid-July.

Students, faculty and staff have been able to sign up for the messaging system since May. More than 8,000 students, faculty and staff had done so as of mid-July.
Storm victims given extension to pay tuition

Kansas University is giving students affected by recent natural disasters some extra time to pay their tuition.

Tuition bills for fall semester were sent last month, with the first payments due Wednesday. The university said it would waive late fees and work out individual deferred payment plans for students living in 10 counties hit by flooding and storms this spring and summer.

“When your family home or business has been flooded out, you have more immediate concerns than a tuition due date. We hope this will give those students under hardship some time and flexibility to focus on recovery and getting their lives back to normal,” Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Richard Lariviere said in July.

The policy applies to students from Elk, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson, Edwards, Kiowa, Osage, Pratt and Stafford counties.

Students may fill out a form at www.ku.edu to qualify.
Citations & Honors

Here’s how Kansas University fared in major rankings in 2007:

- The 2007 edition of the Fiske Guide to Colleges rates KU as one of 14 best buys among public universities.
- The book “Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter” rates KU as one of 20 universities nationwide that help students succeed.
- KU School of Law tied for 66th on the U.S. News & World Report list of Best Graduate (Law) Schools, 2007, and tied for 34th among public universities.
- U.S. News ranked KU’s undergraduate business program as tied for 51st overall and 31st among public universities. The engineering undergraduate program was tied for 71st among all programs and tied for 67th among public universities.
- Other top 25 U.S. News rankings of programs compared with other public institutions:
  - City management and urban policy ranks first.
  - Special education ranks first.
  - Community health, tied for second.
  - Paleontology ranks third.
  - Public management administration, fourth.
  - Occupational therapy, tied for fourth.
  - Audiology, fifth.
  - Public affairs, tied for fifth.
  - Speech-language pathology, sixth.
  - Petroleum engineering, seventh.
  - Social work, tied for eighth.
  - Nursing-midwifery, tied for ninth.
  - Physical therapy, tied for 10th.
  - Music, tied for 12th.
  - Pharmacy, tied for 16th.
  - Public finance and budgeting, tied for 17th.
  - Clinical child psychology, tied for 19th.
  - Health care management, tied for 22nd.
  - Clinical psychology, tied for 23rd.
  - Drama and theater, tied for

By George Diepenbrock
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Kansas University Provost Richard Lariviere admits that it’s interesting and sometimes fascinating to look at rankings on anything.

But beware, he says, particularly regarding major universities, for sometimes the rankings can reflect more about who creates them than how schools end up in them.

He spoke about the most popular university ranking system in U.S. News & World Report, which in 2007 listed KU as the 39th best public university and 88th best among public and private universities. Both were improvements from 2006, but KU has hovered in that range the decade after sitting at 30th among public schools in 1998.

Lariviere said he hadn’t even looked at the U.S. News rankings, but that it is a challenge because many potential students, parents and alumni tend to.

“If you manage a university to try to enhance rankings, then all you are doing is buying into this misrepresentation of what it is that we’re really about here,” Lariviere said.

Public universities tend to suffer in the rankings compared with private universities based on certain criteria, such as selective admissions, he said.

KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway has said the rankings are a proxy for quality that the public seeks out.

Measuring the health of a university is more about having programs that are considered among the best in the field by peers, Lariviere said.

According to the U.S. News Rankings on best graduate schools released in the spring, KU has 12 programs ranked in the top 10 among public universities, including the top-ranked city management and urban policy master’s degree program and the special education master’s and doctorate programs.

Lariviere also considers a major university’s sophomore retention rates, job placement for graduate students and how
much federal grant money is rewarded in peer-reviewed competitions.

“Our first obligation is to our community here — the students, the parents, taxpayers, the people of the state of Kansas — not to the U.S. News and to relative rankings,” he said.

KU leaders do tout the university being named one of 14 best buys in the country by the Fiske Guide to Colleges. And the National Survey of Student Engagement has consistently given KU high marks for how engaged students can become in academics, particularly while learning from faculty members who are also successful researchers.

“That’s a hard culture to achieve, and this place has done it really well,” Lariviere said.

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ONLINE: See past stories about KU's crumbling classrooms at www.ljworld.com

Jim Modig, director of design and construction management for Kansas University, spends a lot of time thinking about future problems.

How many problems would it cause if that air conditioner broke? How big of a mess would it be if that building didn't have heat? What would happen if the roof started leaking in those classrooms?

Thinking about questions like those are how Modig and his staff figure out how to spend scarce dollars that state legislators have devoted to deferred maintenance projects at KU.

"We really try to take a crisis-management approach," Modig said.

Modig said that's the way his office has to approach the issue because there are far more projects than there is money to complete them. That means he tries to tackle the projects that have the potential to create the most disruption to the university if they're allowed to go unaddressed.

For this year, that means doing about $6 million in repairs to the university utility tunnels. Those tunnels provide steam heat to buildings all over campus, and many of the tunnels are 100 years old.

That's an example of a piece of infrastructure that, if it failed, could cause entire sections of campus to be closed down, Modig said.

The university also plans to do about $3.3 million worth of mechanical system improvements on the first and second floors of Wescoe Hall and $640,000 worth of improvements to 50-year-old exhaust hoods in the laboratories at Haworth Hall.

"Wescoe Hall is on the list because it is such a large building with so many classrooms that we heavily rely on," Modig said. "The fume hoods in the laboratories are really critical to maintaining safety."

State lawmakers during the last legislative session agreed to partially fund deferred maintenance issues at regents schools. Over a five-year period, KU is expected to receive about $33 million in funding to tackle overdue maintenance projects.

Modig said that was a start, but it would not come close to addressing all the projects that he has on his list.

"I'm not getting to everything that I would like to get to," Modig said. "But you are very grateful that you have funding to work with."

Modig estimated that KU has about $180 million worth of deferred maintenance projects. He said that list grows every year as university buildings and infrastructure age.

"The list is growing at about $30 million per year, and we're getting about $6 million a year, on average, to spend," Modig said "So, what it means is that we're falling behind a little slower than we used to."

A shortage in state funding isn't the only issue KU is dealing with when it comes to figuring out how to best tackle the maintenance projects. Lindy Eakin, vice provost for administration and finance at KU, said energy costs and the rapidly increasing costs of construction materials has been a challenge.

Eakin said rising copper and steel prices have been major factors in the costs for several of the more needed maintenance projects at the university. He said the increases simply mean that crews haven't been able to do as much work as the university would like.

"For example, when we're replacing the 50-year-old fume hoods in the laboratories, we should be replacing the 50-year-old cabinets and sinks that are below them. But many times we're not able to."

Modig, though, is glad to have what funding he has. He said during the five-year period, he'll be able to address issues in the critical utility tunnels and at 11 university buildings.

Design work soon will be under way for many of the projects that are part of the state's fiscal 2008 year, which began on July 1. Modig said most of the construction work will not begin until the spring of 2008.

"It will begin around spring break and basically will be ongoing for the next five years," Modig said. "I tell people it will be a trickle of projects from the spring of each year to the fall of each year. We'll do additional design work during the winter."

Modig said planners are working to ensure that the projects aren't too disruptive to classes and teaching activities on the university.

"But it is going to take a lot of work on everybody's part, and a lot of patience too," Modig said.

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THE CAMPANILE is viewed through the framework of the Multicultural Resource Center as workers move scaffolding inside the building. The center is under construction at the intersection of 13th Street and Oread Avenue, and just north of the Kansas Union. The Kansas Board of Regents approved a five-year, $134.4 million plan in June to make repairs at state universities.
New Y director named for Bonner YMCA

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The Bonner Springs YMCA has a new center executive. Sheryl Hungerford took over as director of the facility June 15, after Dale Crumb left to work full-time as the center executive of Providence YMCA in Kansas City, Kan.

Hungerford, a Wichita native, has been with the YMCA for 23 years, after studying physical therapy at Washburn University and Kansas University. She was previously the branch director of the downtown Topeka YMCA.

She’s worked in several different capacities in physical fitness, including aquatics and health and wellness.

“I’m very good at programming,” Hungerford said.

There are some challenges ahead for her and other health-facility managers.

“One of biggest things I see in the nation is we’re getting a little older as baby boomers, and needing to find ways to have fun and stay healthy,” she said.

To that end, Hungerford said she will focus on helping Y members make “strategic plans and strategic goals and objectives.”

Her plan to accomplish that, she said, is to get people past the mentality of making unrealistic goals and instead work toward achievable, incremental improvements.

For example, she said, instead of saying “on Monday I’m going to start a diet and work out every day,” a more reasonable goal might be to say “I’m going to take 2,000 more steps, and not have that extra Pepsi.”

Hungerford said the YMCA would spread the message through education, role-modeling and events.

One such event will be next week, to kick off the “Activate America” national YMCA campaign. The three Wyandotte County YMCA’s are sponsoring an event beginning at 11 a.m. on Sept 22 at the Legends at Village West shopping center. The event will work like a bingo game, with participants taking their cards around to different merchants, to get a stamp inside each store, for a path measuring 2,000 feet.

There will be a drawing for prizes at the end, including pedometers, T-shirts and goodie bags.

“Research shows that achieving energy balance, adding 2000 steps eating 100 fewer enough to prevent average weight gain,” Hungerford said.
Sowers graduates from KU's Kansas Law Enforcement training at Hutch

HUTCHINSON — Monte C. Strait, special agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Kansas City, Mo., office, congratulated 52 graduates of the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center at an Aug. 10 ceremony at the 4-H Encampment Building on the Kansas State Fairgrounds.

The graduates, who began their training course April 30, represented 37 municipal, county and state law enforcement agencies from across Kansas. They were the 191st basic training class of graduates. Travis W. Sowers, a patrolman on the Kingman Police Force, was one of the graduates.

The training center is a unit of University of Kansas Continuing Education. Established in 1968 as the central law enforcement training facility for the state, the center is near Yoder.

Graduates receive certificates of course completion and Kansas law enforcement certification from the Kansas Commission on Peace Officers' Standards and Training, the state's law enforcement licensing authority. The training course fulfills the state requirement for law enforcement training. Classroom lectures and hands-on applications help train officers to solve the increasingly complex problems they face in the line of duty.

The center trains the majority of municipal, county and state law enforcement officers in Kansas and oversees the training of the remaining officers at seven authorized and certified academy programs operated by local law enforcement agencies and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

About 350 officers enroll annually in the 14-week basic training program. The center offered continuing education and specialized training to more than 2,500 Kansas officers last year.
Jana R. Smith, for being recognized with a certificate honoring 25 years or more of service in education by the School of Education at the University of Kansas.
Otte is KU Mount Oread Scholar

LAWRENCE — Abby Marie Otte, Winfield, took part in the 11th annual walk up the hill for Mount Oread Scholars at 8:30 this morning. Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle, associate vice provost for Student Success, led the walk and provide commentary about campus history and Mount Oread, pointing out landmarks along the way.

Abbe, daughter of Lucy Freeman, Winfield, is a freshman. She graduated from Winfield High School in May.

The walk signifies the beginning of a higher education journey for the 189 Mount Oread Scholars whose ultimate goal is to walk down the hill upon graduation. Two scholars will carry the 2007 KU graduation banner to further mark this important beginning, and scholars are encouraged to wear their Mount Oread Scholars T-shirt that states, “What Goes Up, Must Come Down.”

Established in 1996, the Mount Oread Scholars Program is designed to facilitate academic connections on campus and is part of KU’s University Advising Center. New first-year students are invited to become Mount Oread Scholars during their first years at KU if they graduated in the top 20 percent of their high school classes and received an ACT composite score of at least 28 or a minimum SAT score of 1,240.

Mount Oread Scholars work individually with an adviser in their fields of interest, share class schedules to form study or discussion groups, attend scholar support sessions and enroll in relatively small classes taught by veteran faculty. There is also a Learning Community and seminar course reserved for scholars. The program’s retention rate the past two years is about 94 percent.

The walk up the hill was followed by a continental breakfast reception at Spencer Research Library. Library staff, including Sherry Williams, interim head of Spencer Research Library, and librarian Tami Albin, greeted the students and invited them to learn more about all of KU’s libraries as they enjoyed a commanding view of the Kaw River Valley from the gallery.

During the breakfast, Williams, Nemeth Tuttle, Senior Vice Provost Kathleen McCluskey-Pawcett and Mount Oread Scholars Program alumna Ava Dinges addressed the scholars.

The new Mount Oread Scholars are listed at www.news.ku.edu/2007/august/8/moread.shtml.

Abby Otte
$7.7 MILLION CRIME
Three women arrested

MORTGAGE FRAUD SCHEME ALLEGED

Three accused of using stolen Social Security numbers to help get loans for illegal immigrants.

By BENITA Y. WILLIAMS
The Kansas City Star

Three Leawood women helped illegal immigrants use stolen Social Security numbers — some from dead people — to commit $7.7 million in mortgage fraud, authorities alleged Friday.

A Johnson County grand jury this week indicted Doris Toledo, 67, and her daughters, Sonia Toledo, 38, and Sylvia Toledo, 42.

They are accused of using the Social Security numbers to obtain home loans for illegal immigrants.

Authorities said the scheme generated $128,000 in fraudulent loan-origination fees and $228,000 in real estate commissions for the women.

Each woman is charged with 11 counts of computer crimes, 11 counts of making a false writing and one count of theft by deception. If convicted, each could face up to 18 months in prison.

All three women pleaded not guilty at an arraignment Friday. Their attorneys said they plan

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to vigorously fight the allegations.

"Ms. Toledo has entered a plea of not guilty because she is not guilty," said Gordon Aitcheson, who represents Doris Toledo. "We look forward to a trial and would expect to be fully vindicated."

During the hearings, the women's bonds were reduced from $100,000 to $2,500. Their attorneys argued that the women had families and property and no criminal records.

Prosecutors did not object and said they did not consider the women a flight risk because their passports already had been confiscated.

All three women were born in Peru, according to court records. Sonia Toledo came to the United States nearly two decades ago to study business at the University of Kansas. She has sold real estate and served on the Kansas City Ethnic Enrichment Commission.

Attorneys said Doris Toledo is a resident alien who has been in the country nine years.

Attorneys said Sylvia Toledo is a U.S. citizen and also has lived in El Paso, Texas.

Johnson County District Attorney Phil Kline announced the charges at a press conference Friday afternoon. He said U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Secret Service also had arrested or charged 30 illegal immigrants discovered during the course of the investigation. Some of them are cooperating with the investigation, he said.

"This is an excellent example of interagency and intergovernmental cooperation," Kline said.

But some immigration experts said the case also shows how vulnerable the immigrant community can be to scams.

A former Kansas director of the League of United Latin American Citizens said that immigrants who are in the country illegally can sometimes be confused about how business is conducted here.

"It's easy to take advantage of them and it's sad to see that," former director Michael Martinez said. It's particularly disheartening to see people duped who are struggling to make a life for themselves, he said.

Officials said the scheme dated back to 2002 and included more than 100 properties in Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas and in Kansas City, Mo. The charges announced Friday cover 11 transactions in 2003 and 2004 in Johnson County.

The activity was uncovered in April 2005 during a routine Federal Housing Administra-

tion audit indicating that stolen Social Security numbers had been used to process several loans out of the Building and Loan Mortgage Co. in Olathe, where Sonia Toledo worked as a loan officer.

Prosecutors said they had no evidence that anyone else at the company was involved.

Authorities said Doris and Sylvia Toledo are co-owners of the Grupo Toledo real estate company in Westwood.

Representatives of the two companies could not be reached for comment Friday.

The results of the audit were forwarded to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which launched a formal investigation.

Kline said charges were filed in Johnson County because similar charges under federal law would require the homeowners to be in default on the mortgages. He said some, but not all, of the homeowners involved in the charges announced Friday had defaulted.

No charges have been filed in connection with the Wyandotte County or Kansas City mortgages, officials said.

The Star's Diane Carroll contributed to this report.

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