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Article published Nov 29, 2006

## **BMW's H7 fuels Calif. visit**

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Most people go to California for the beaches, the movie stars, or simply the culture.

This week, U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis went for the hydrogen.

Inglis, R-S.C., was part of a 10-member delegation from the Palmetto State that toured California on Monday and Tuesday and will be on hand today when BMW unveils its new Hydrogen 7 luxury model at the Los Angeles Auto Show.

The trip was designed to teach South Carolinians what California is doing to drive its state toward a hydrogen economy, and show them what lessons can be applied back home.

The delegation is leaving with a stronger desire to see hydrogen refueling stations pop up in South Carolina, a realization of how much the private sector can play in building a hydrogen economy, and, for Inglis, a stronger case for convincing Congress to take action on alternative energy.

"There's no reason that we can't do in South Carolina what they are doing in California," Inglis said from his cell phone outside Sacramento.

"The opportunity is available to us. Of course, there are 49 other states besides South Carolina that see a hydrogen future for themselves, but I think we are playing well to our strengths."

California has long been seen as a leader in the field, and aims to have 300 hydrogen cars and buses on its roads by the end of next year, complete with hydrogen refueling stations in major cities and along major roads -- the "hydrogen highway."

But Inglis points out that the impetus behind California's hydrogen initiatives rest in air quality, while South Carolina's interest in the emerging technology is more driven by economic development and has heavy academic involvement: "We want to create jobs and make some money out of this thing," he said.

The Palmetto State also has BMW's commitment to hydrogen on its side, Inglis said.

The automaker's new Hydrogen 7 model will be built in Dingolfing, Germany -- not at the Spartanburg plant, spokeswoman Bunny Richardson said. A limited number of cars will be driven by

"select" people -- celebrities, politicians and others with the ability to influence public opinion -- across the U.S. and Europe.

Inglis said he hopes the car will become successful and eventually be built in Spartanburg.

The H7 is a "dual fuel" vehicle, one designed to run on hydrogen and conventional gasoline. That's because hydrogen refueling stations are few and far between.

South Carolina should be able to complete a hydrogen highway system with fewer refueling stations than California, simply because this state is smaller, said Fred Humes, chairman of the S.C. Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Alliance.

This state is working on building one near the Savannah River National Lab in Aiken. Columbia will need one soon because a hydrogen bus is expected to be used there by University of South Carolina students by 2008, and Clemson's International Center for Automotive Research in Greenville "would be a natural," Humes said.

"What comes up over and over again is the thing we felt to be true: the need for infrastructure," Humes said via cell phone. "They've indicated that's one of their weaker areas -- for people to be able to conveniently be able to go and refuel. That's a good take-away for us, that we, as a state, put more of a focus on that."

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