Alternative Fuels & Energy Efficiency: More Important than Ever

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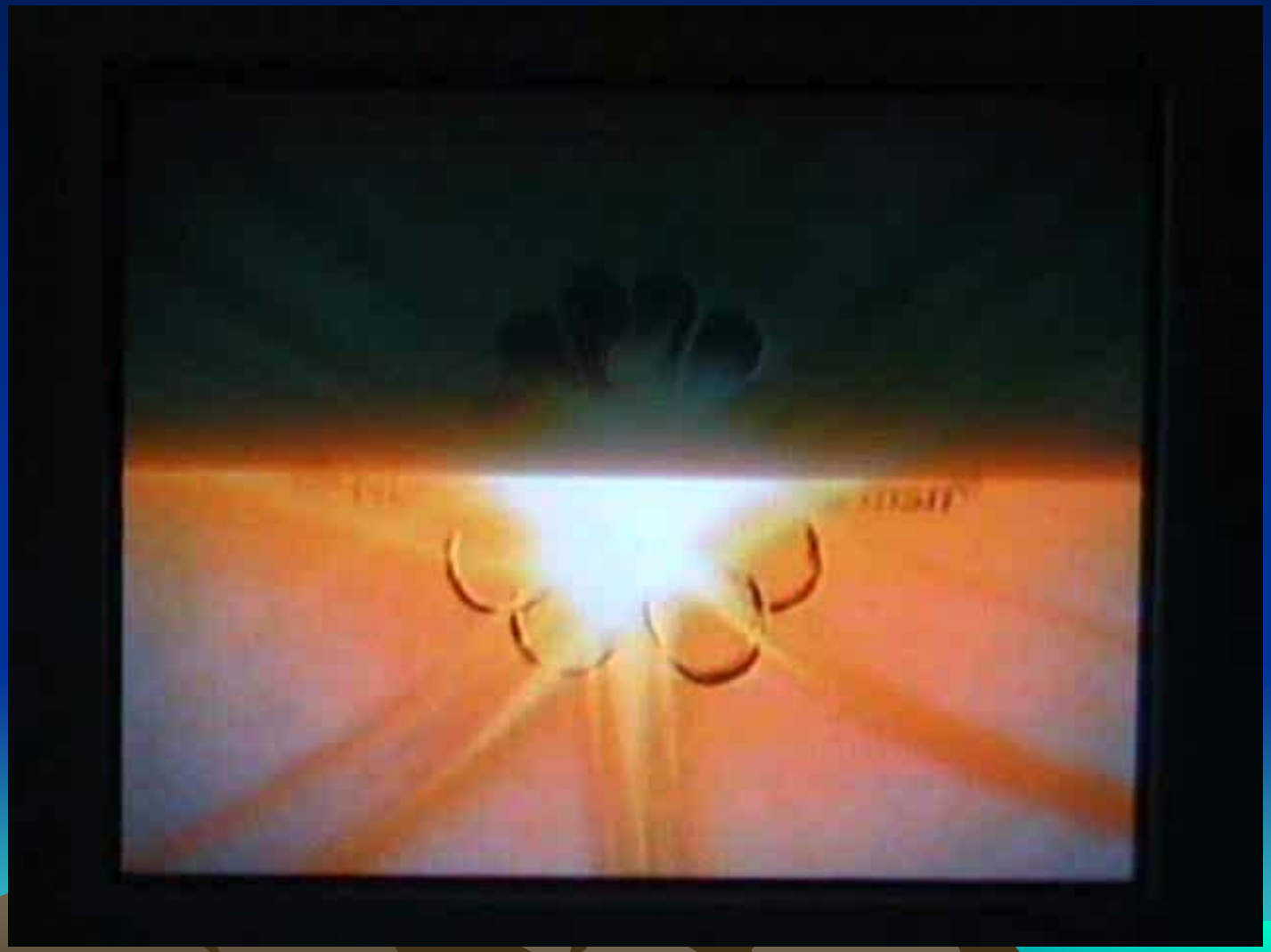
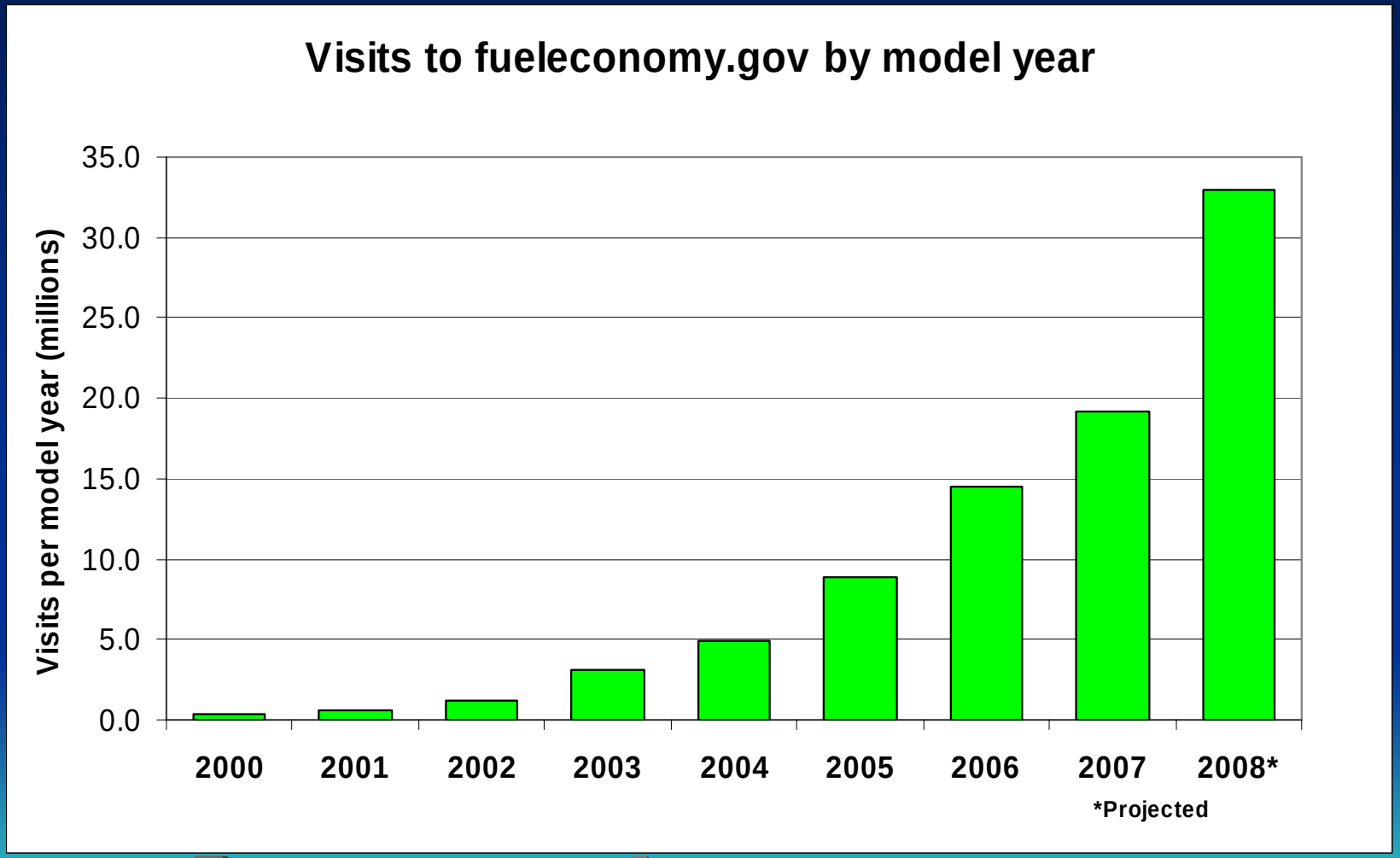
University of California at Davis
&
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

Clean Cities National Leadership Retreat
Big Sky, Montana
September 17, 2008

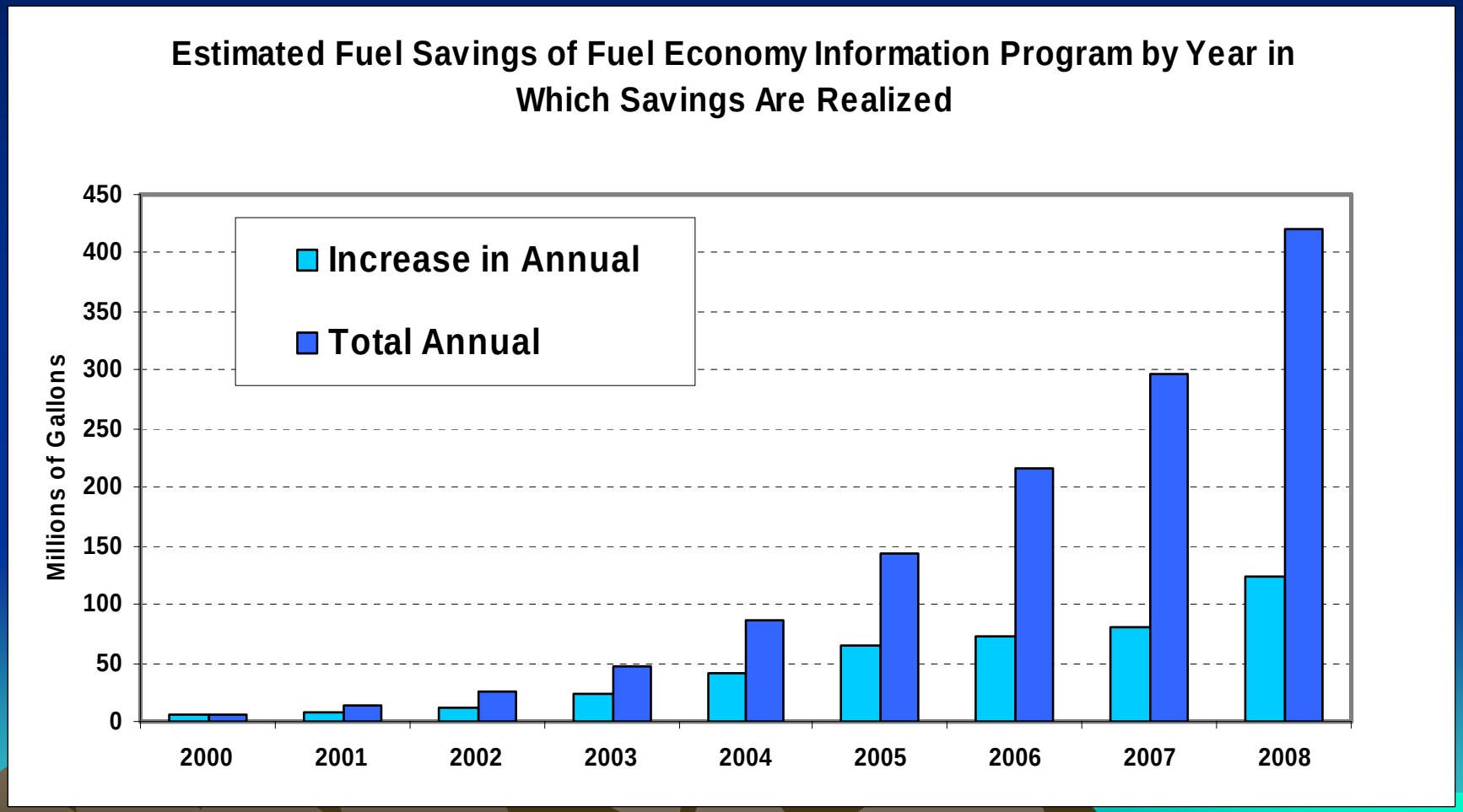
The Beijing Olympics were a high point for the fuel economy information project.



fueleconomy.gov exceeded its goal for traffic, hosting more than 30 million user sessions.



We estimate (conservatively, I think) that we saved consumers about $1.5 billion in fuel last year. It is not nearly enough but it is…



More important than ever…

- Climate change is turning out to be more urgent than scientists thought.

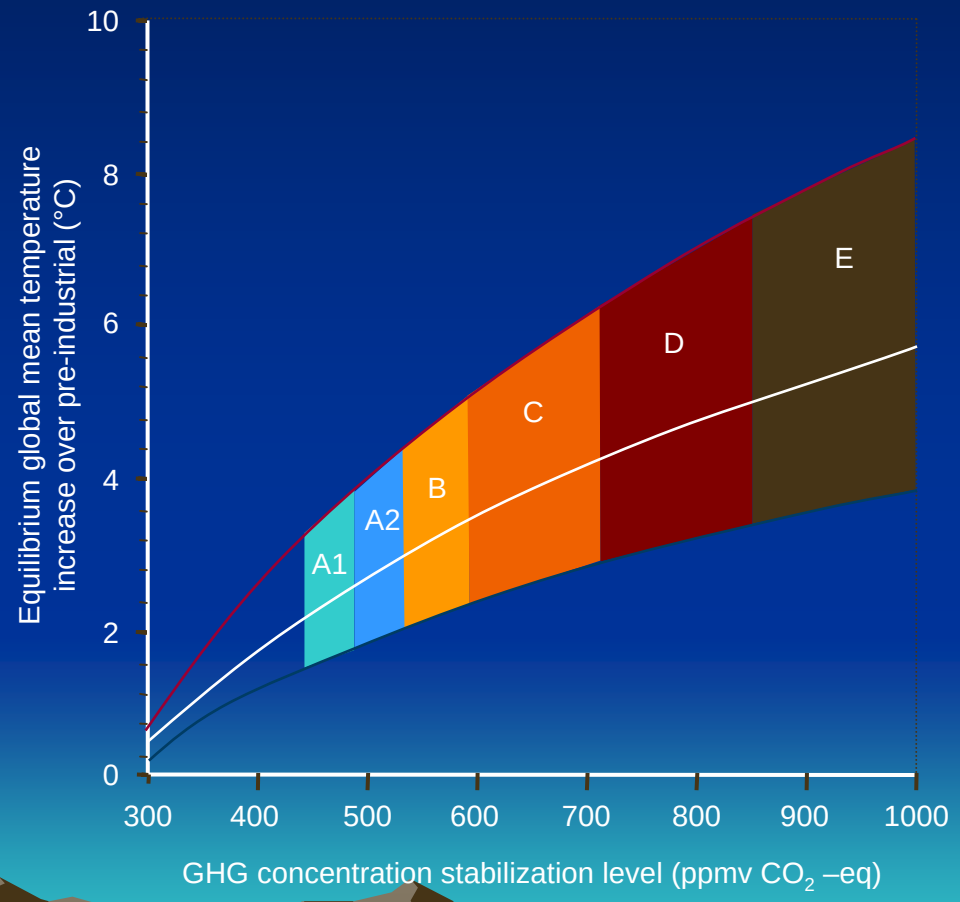
- The direct economic costs of oil dependence are greater than ever before: **$¾ TRILLION** in 2008.

A scientific consensus points to extremely challenging GHG mitigation goals. DOE research has identified a similar quantitative goal for oil independence.

- CLIMATE CHANGE:
  - 50% to 80% reduction over 2005 CO_2 emissions by 2050.
- OIL INDEPENDENCE:
  - reduced oil use + alternative energy sources = 11 mmdb by 2030.
- What gets measured gets done.

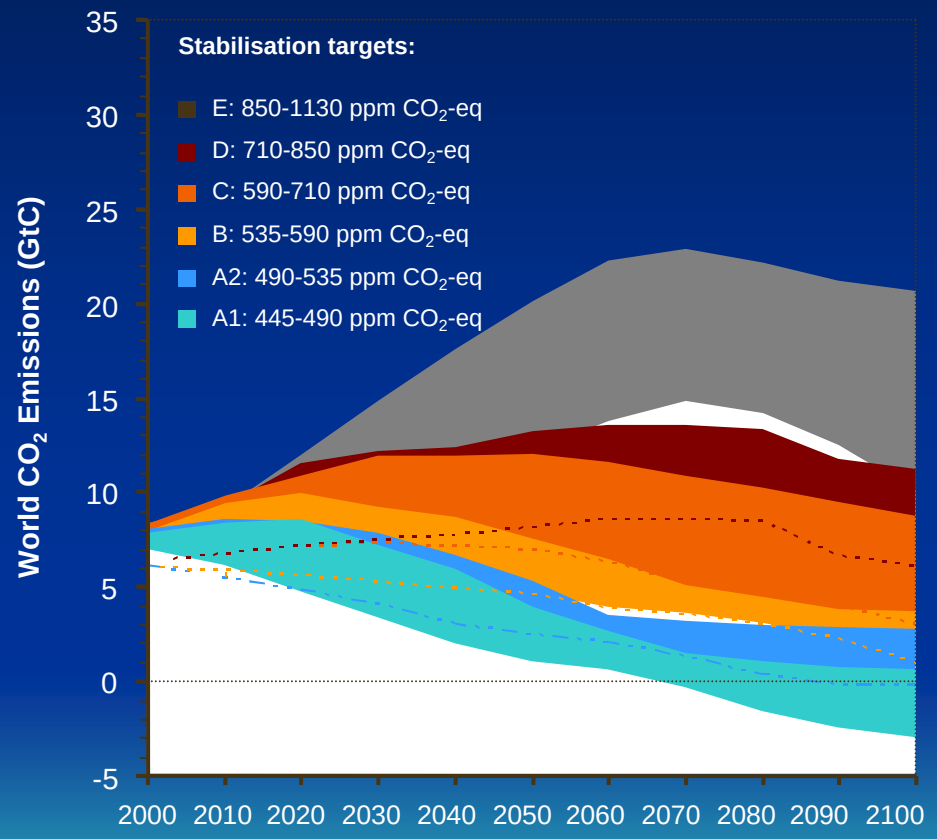
Stabilizing global mean temperature requires a stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

We have rigorous, quantitative, albeit imperfect, models of how much and how long GHGs emitted will remain in the atmosphere, what their radiative forcing will be, and what impact that will have on the global climate. These are the basis of GHG mitigation goals.



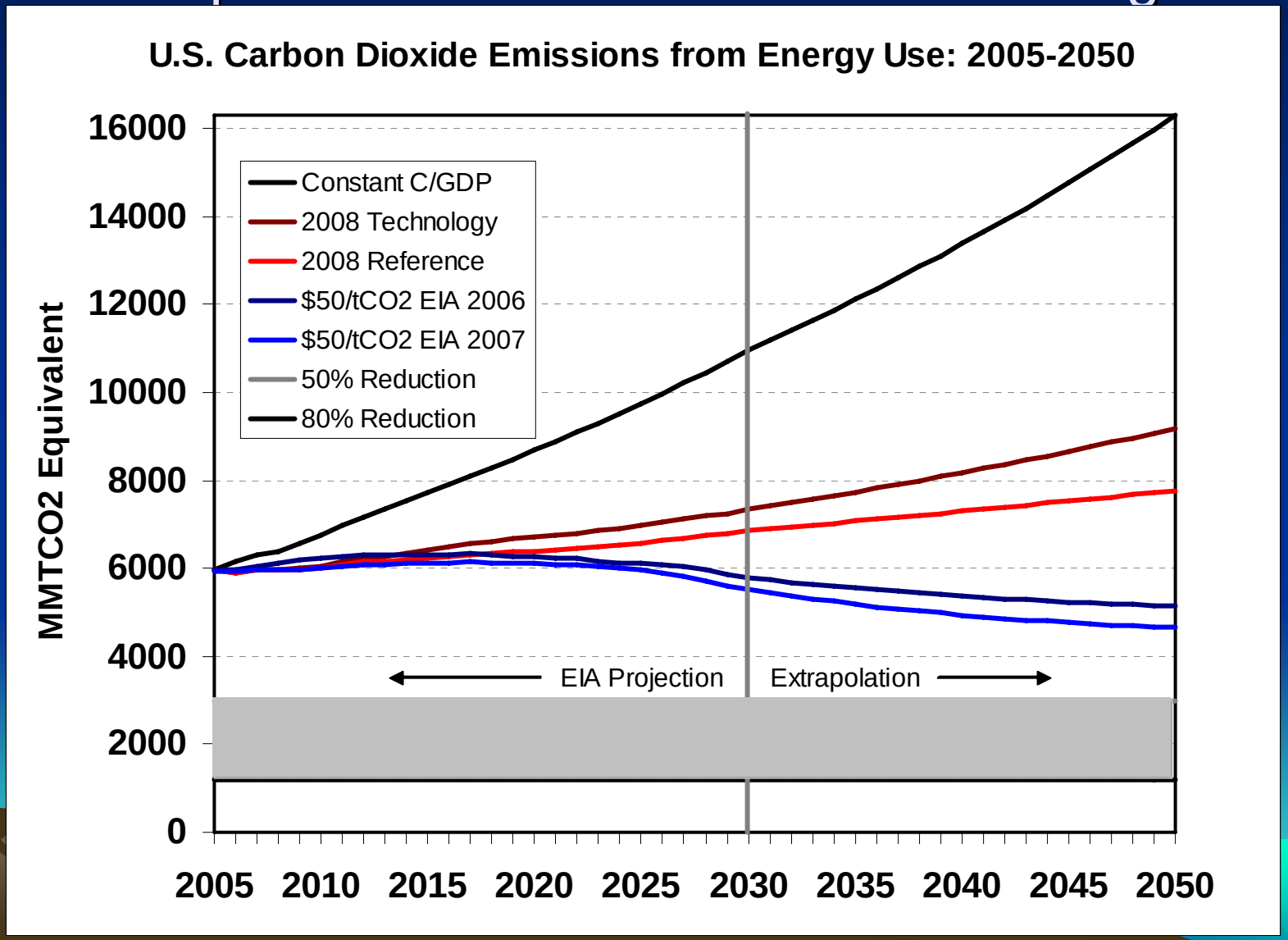
The lower the stabilisation level, the earlier global CO_2 emissions have to peak.

- The lower the target stabilisation level limit, the earlier global emissions have to peak.
- Limiting increase to 3.2 – 4°C requires emissions to peak within the next 55 years.
- Limiting increase to 2.8 – 3.2°C requires global emissions to peak within 25 years.
- **Limiting global mean temperature increases to 2 – 2.4°C above pre-industrial levels requires global emissions to peak within 15 years and then fall to about 50 to 85% of current levels by 2050.**

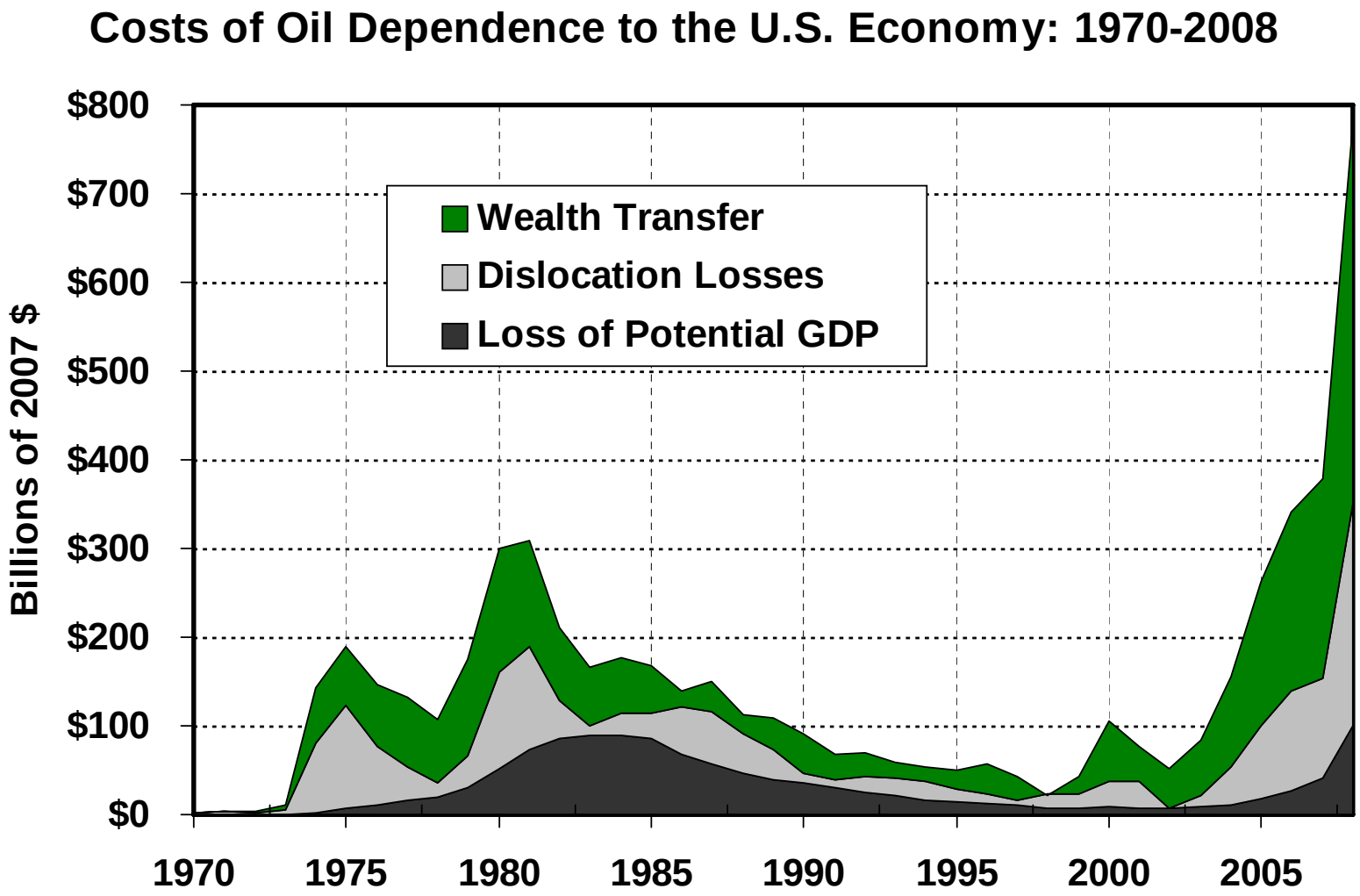


Multigas and CO_2 only studies combined

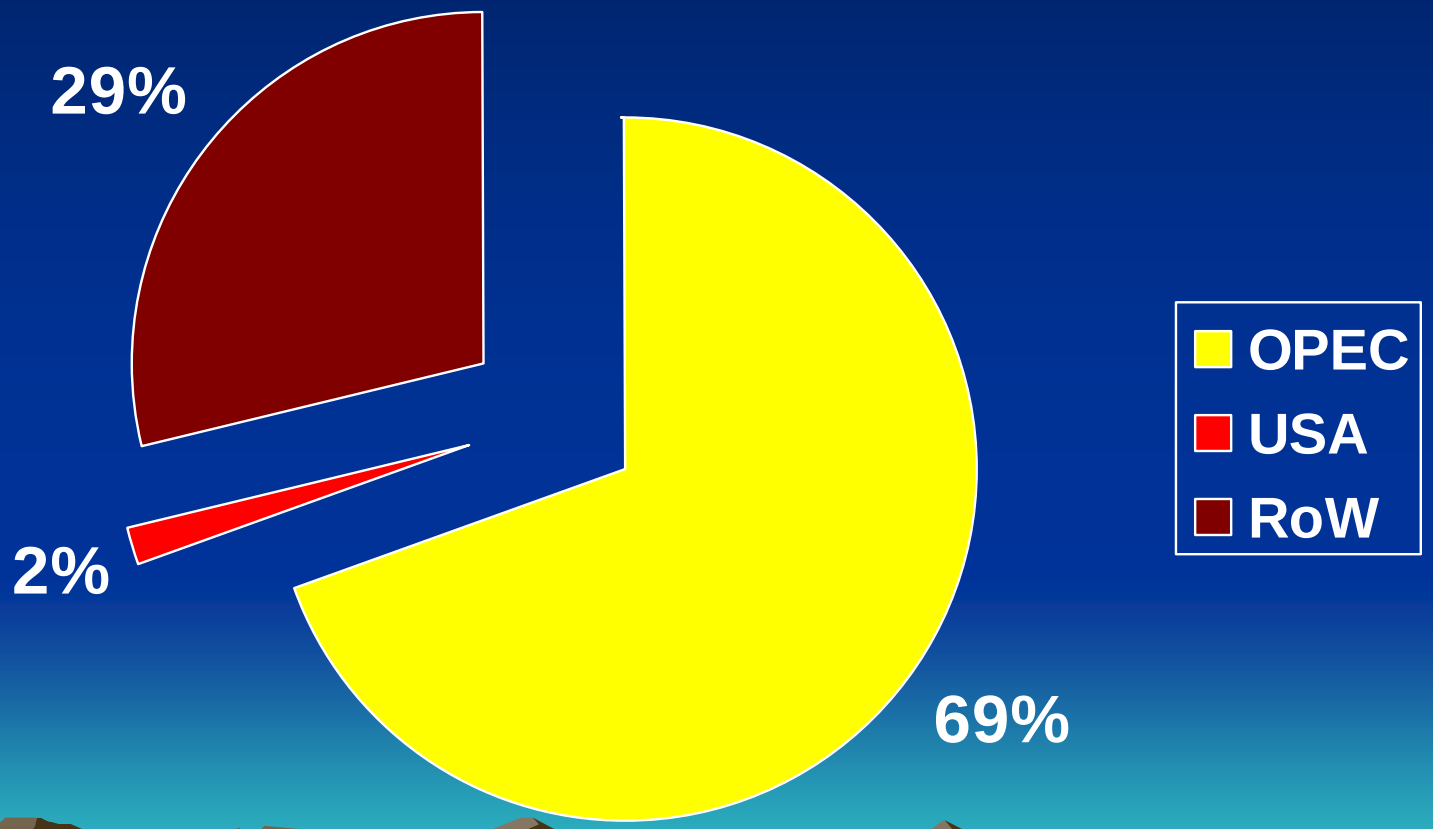
EIA: Even with a $50/ton price on CO_2 emissions *AND* carbon capture and storage *AND* lots of nuclear power we will not reach our GHG goals.



Oil dependence is costing our economy $750 billion. The money goes to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, Russia…

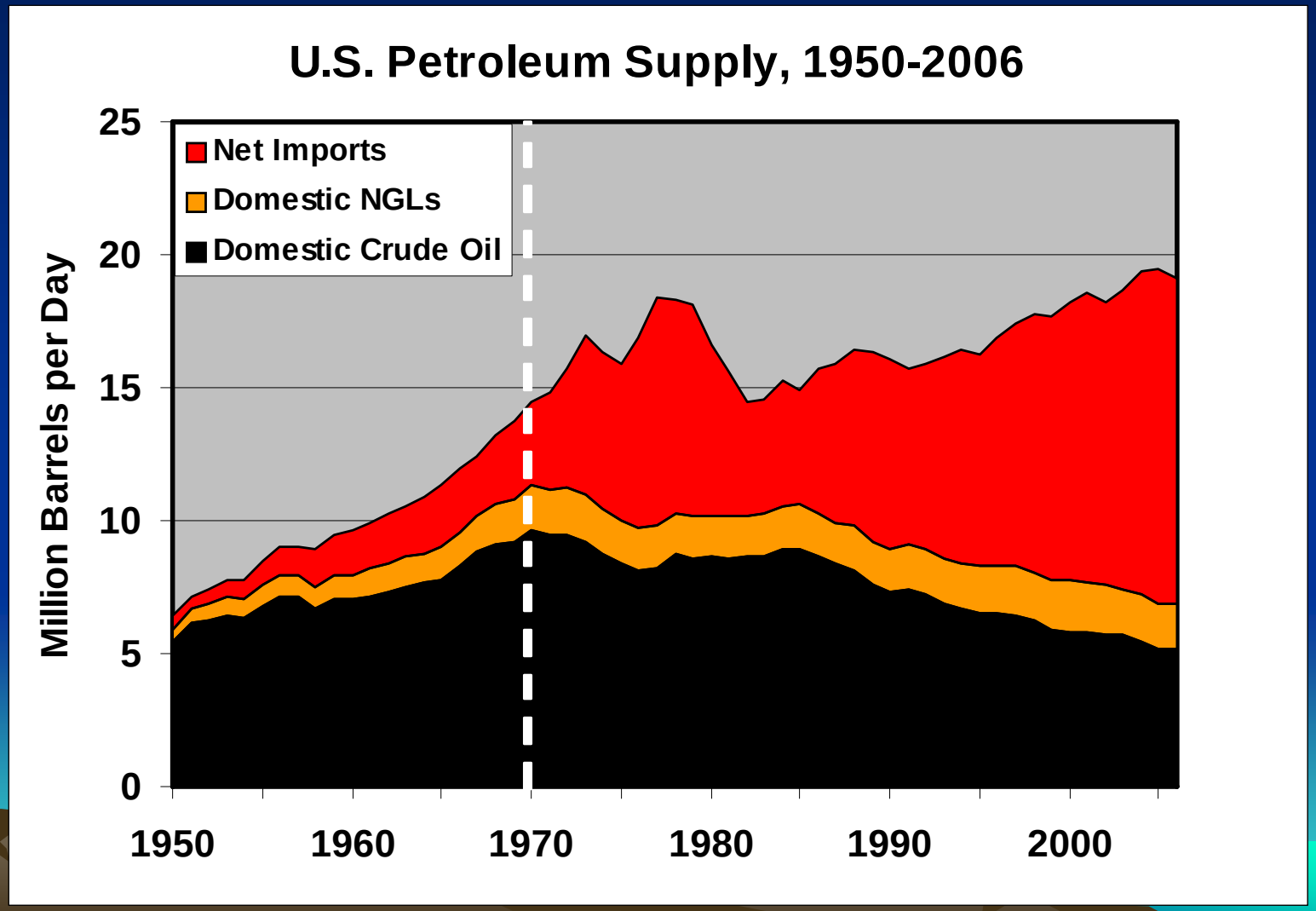


OPEC members own 69% (state-owned oil companies 81%) of proven oil reserves and over 50% of estimated ultimate resources of conventional oil.

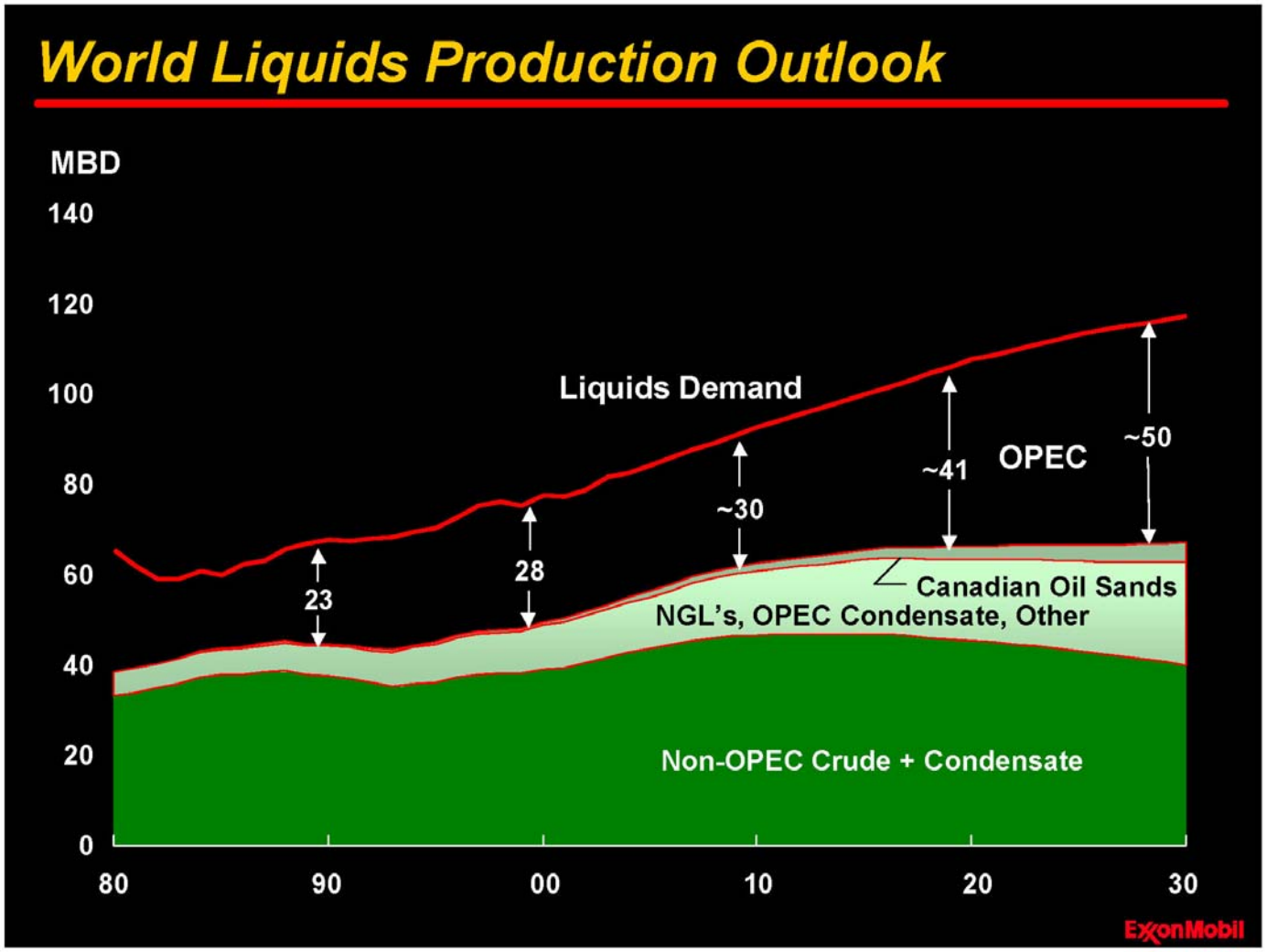


Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2006.

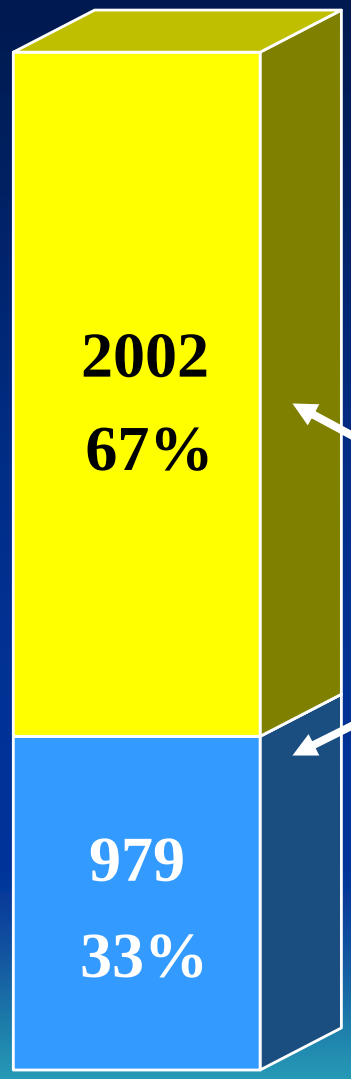
In the 1970s OPEC's market power was strengthened by growing world demand, its increasing market share and…the peaking of US crude oil production in 1970.



Today, the world is facing another oil peak. Analyses from the IEA to ExxonMobil see a peak or plateau soon, maybe right now.



The RATE of world oil use is alarming!



Billions of Barrels

The 2007 NPC report expects 1.1 trillion barrels of oil production over the next 25 years. More than consumed in in all of human history.

Remaining recoverable crude oil*

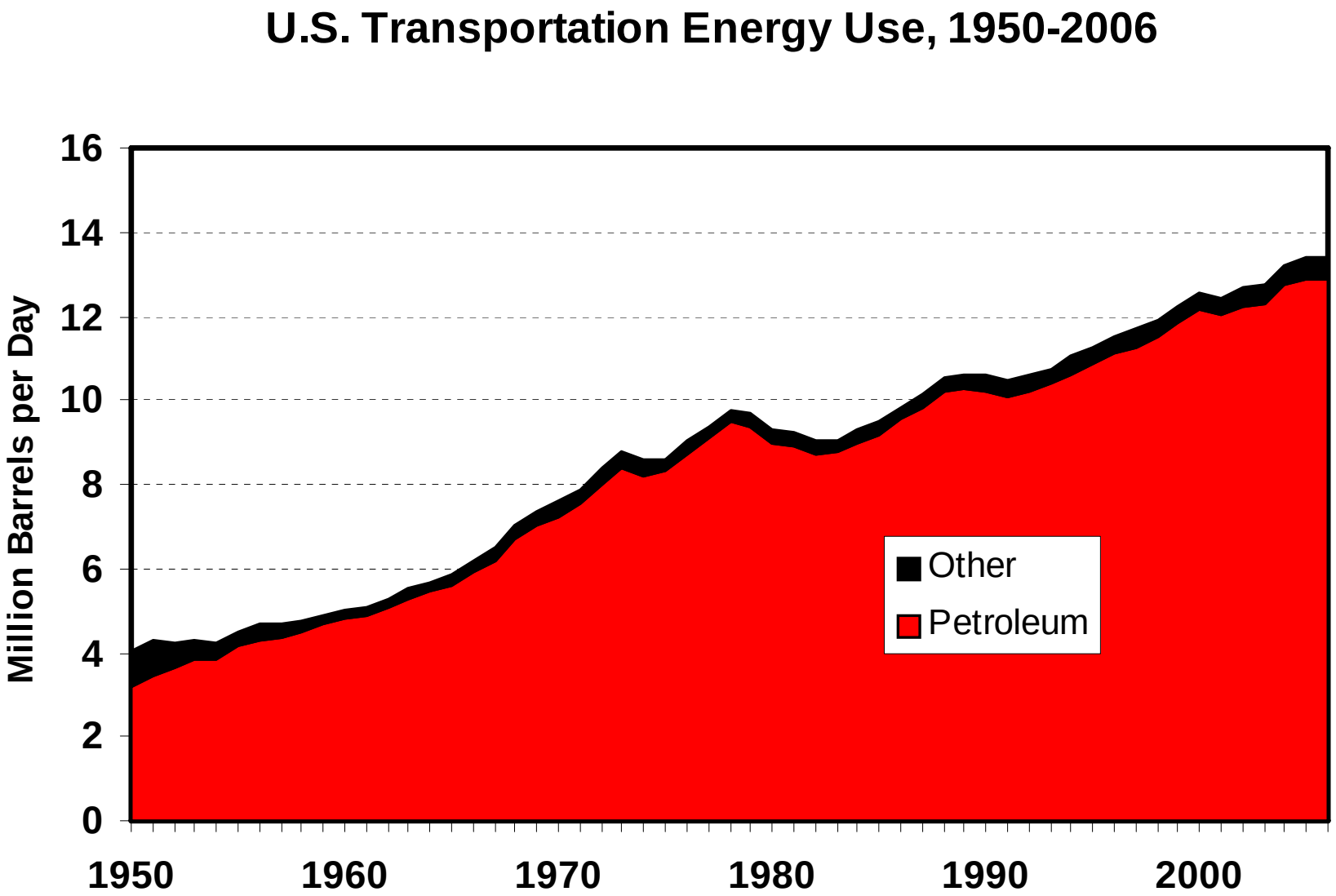
Cumulative Production to end of 2005

Cumulative Production to the end of 1995 was 710! Over ¼ of all oil ever consumed was consumed in the last 10 years.

* From USGS 2000, USGS 1995, and MMS 1996

USGS

Our oil dependence is mainly about transportation which consumes over 6,500 gallons of petroleum per second.



We are combatting mistaken interpretations of "oil independence": IT IS ACHIEVABLE.

- "The U.S. may be addicted to oil, but many of its politicians are addicted to "energy independence" – which may be **among the least realistic political slogans in American history**." J.J. Fialka, WSJ, 7/5/2006
- "**Calls for energy independence are unrealistic, to put it mildly**, for the foreseeable future; cutting oil consumption to current domestic production would severely derail an economy in which cheap and rapid transportation is taken for granted." I.W.H. Parry and J.W. Anderson, RFF, 2005.
- "The voices that espouse "energy independence" are doing the nation a disservice by focusing on **a goal that is unachievable** over the forseeable future and that encourages the adoption of inefficient and counterproductive policies." Task Force of Council on Foreign Relations, 2006.
- "**Energy independence is hogwash.** From nearly any standpoint — economic, military, political, or environmental — energy independence makes no sense. Worse yet, the inane obsession with the idea of energy independence is preventing the United States from having an honest and effective discussion about the energy challenges it now faces." (Bryce, 2008) Robert Bryce, *Gusher of Lies: The Dangerous Delusions of Energy Independence*.

What is oil dependence?

Oil dependence is primarily an economic problem with significant national security implications caused by,

- use of market power by oil producing states,
- importance of oil to the economy and,
- lack of economical substitutes for oil.

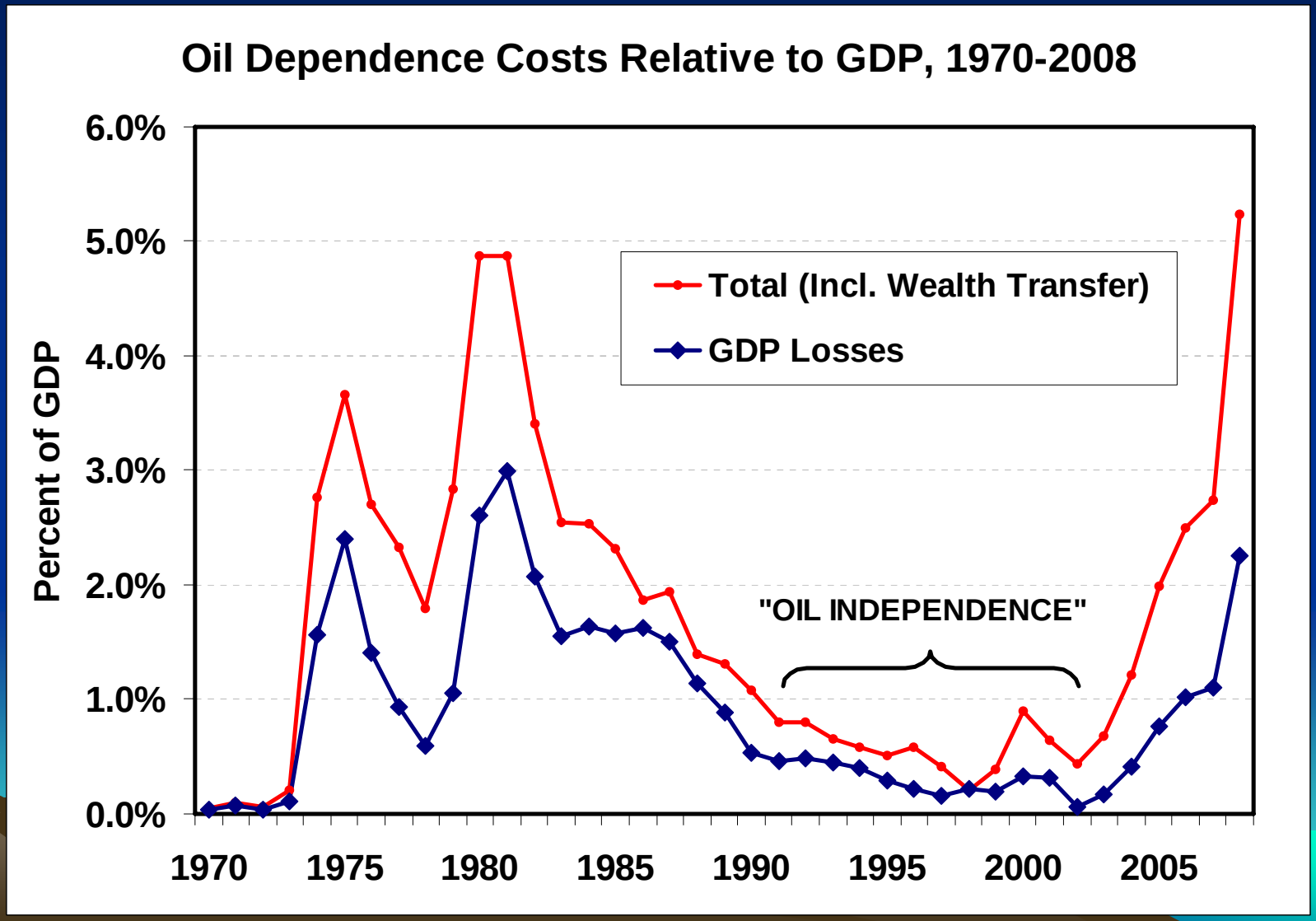
What is oil (energy) independence?

- Use no oil?
- Import no oil?
- Let’s consult the dictionary.
- A state in which a consuming nation’s actions are “not subject to restraining or directing influence by others” as a consequence of its need for oil.

A measurable goal is needed.

- QUALITATIVE:
  - For all conceivable world oil market conditions, the costs of oil dependence to the economy will be so small that they have no effect on economic, military or foreign policy.
- QUANTITATIVE:
  - The estimated total economic costs of oil dependence in any year will be less than 1% of GDP with 95% probability by 2030.

I think we have already experienced "energy independence"…for a while.



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http://lugar.senate.gov/energy/links/commentary/08_greene_summary.cfm

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Expert Commentary

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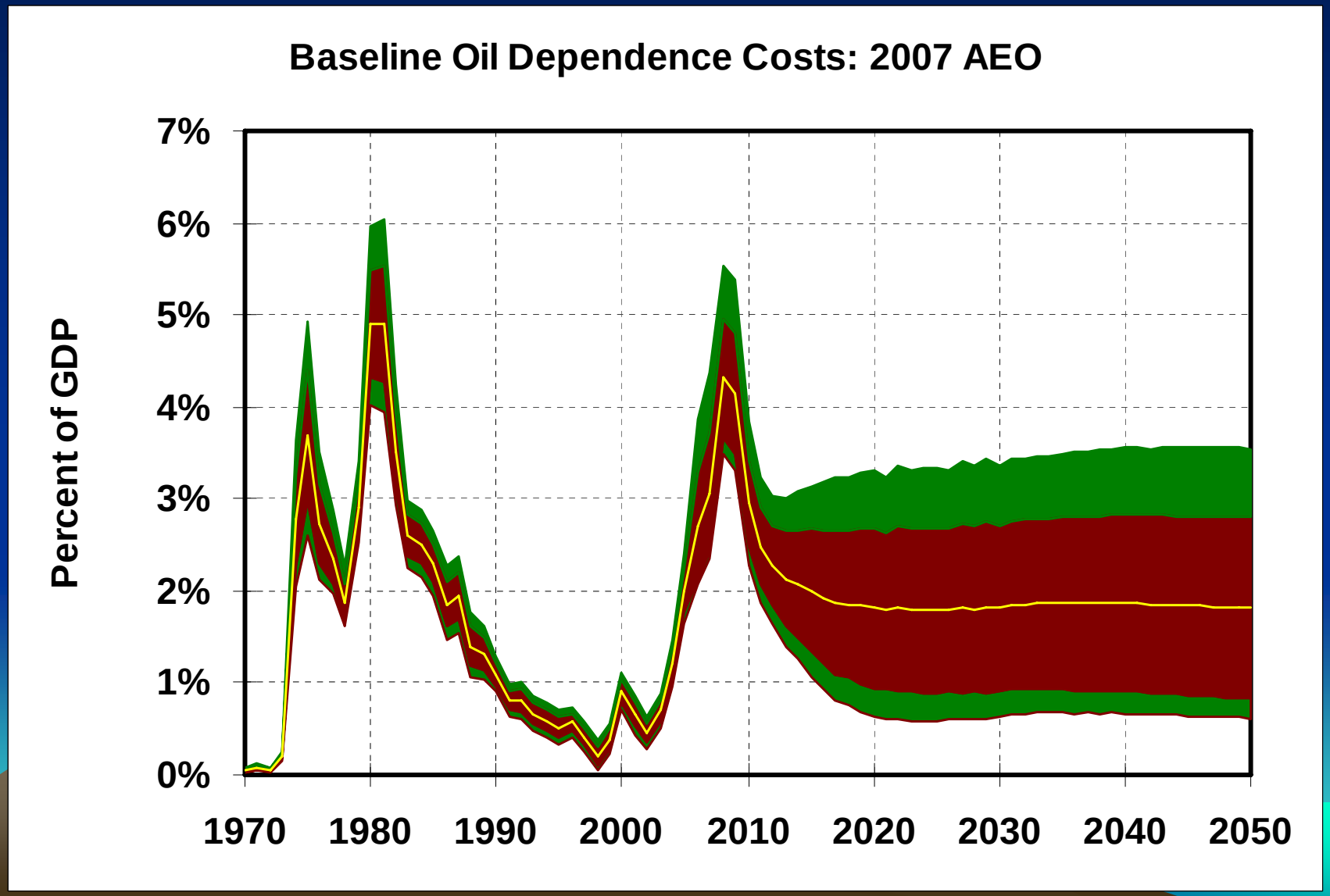
Oil Independence: Realistic Goal or Empty Slogan?

By David L. Greene and Paul N. Leiby
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

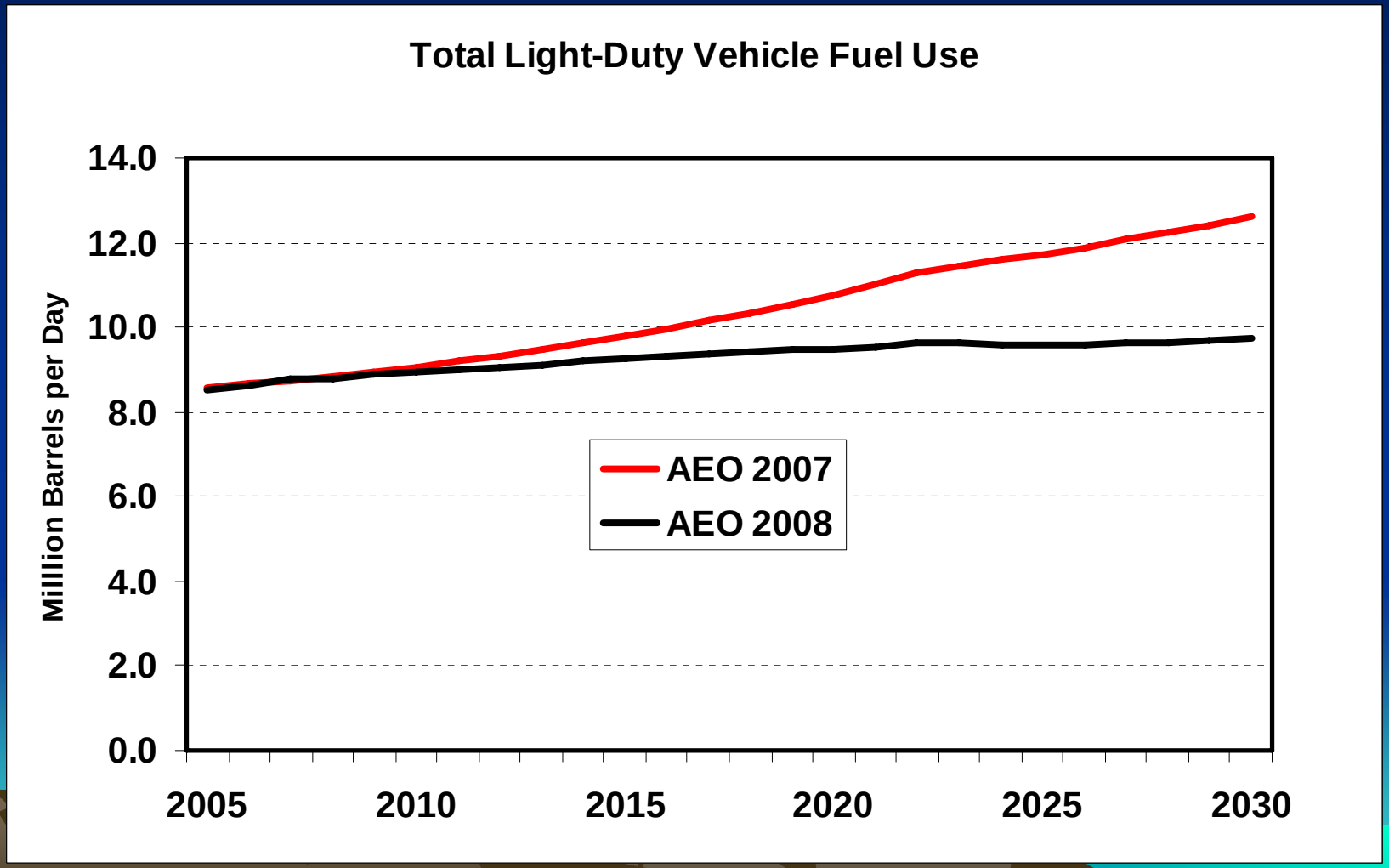
Our nation's dependence on oil is a threat to our economy and our security. And yet the belie
either impossible or impractical to achieve "energy independence" has been gaining currency.
by Resources for the Future declares that "Energy Independence is Unrealistic". The Wall Str
asserts that energy independence "...may be among the least realistic political slogans in Ame

Under business as usual, expected costs are 2% of GDP, over $400 billion per year in 2030.

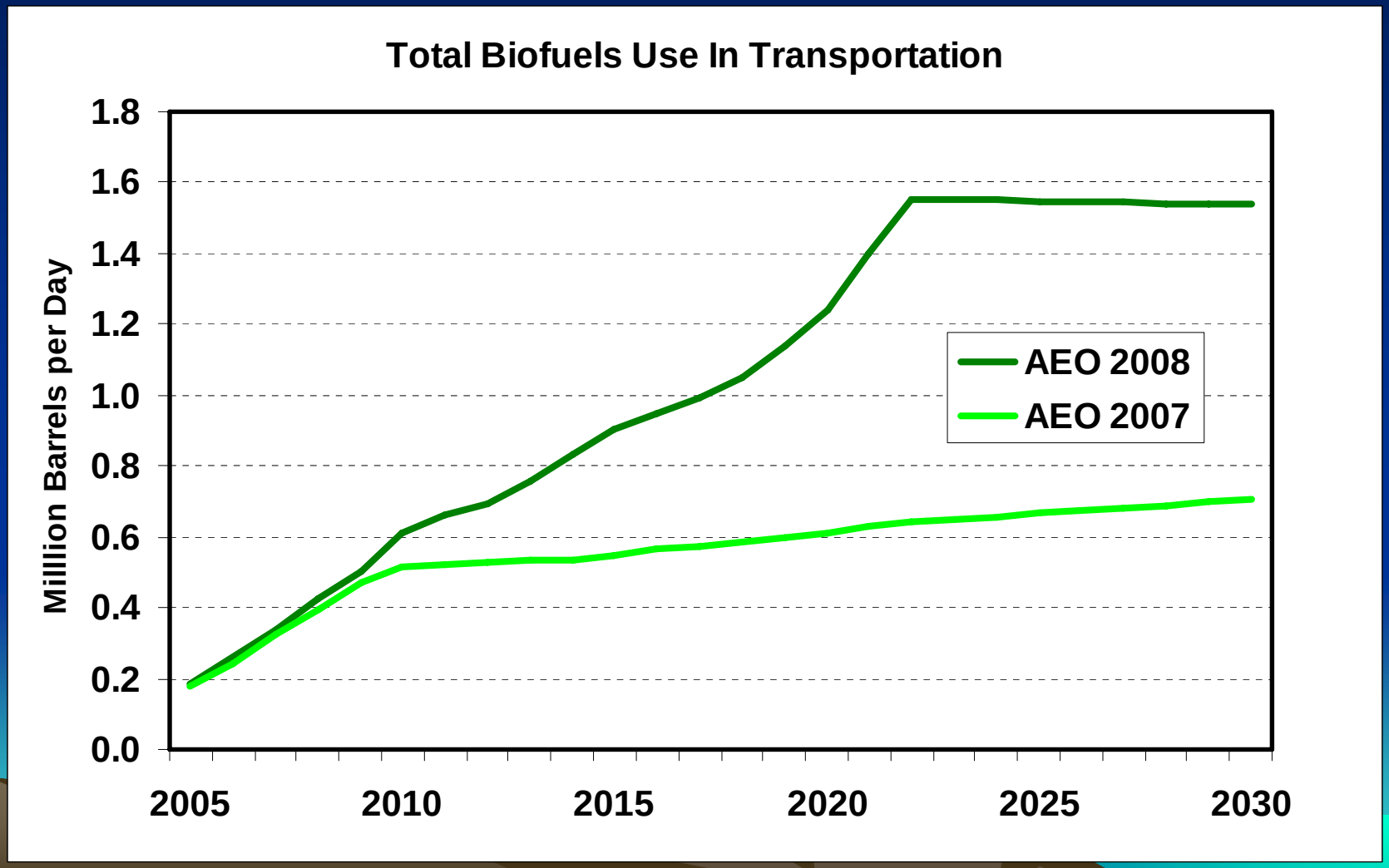


What will the 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act accomplish?

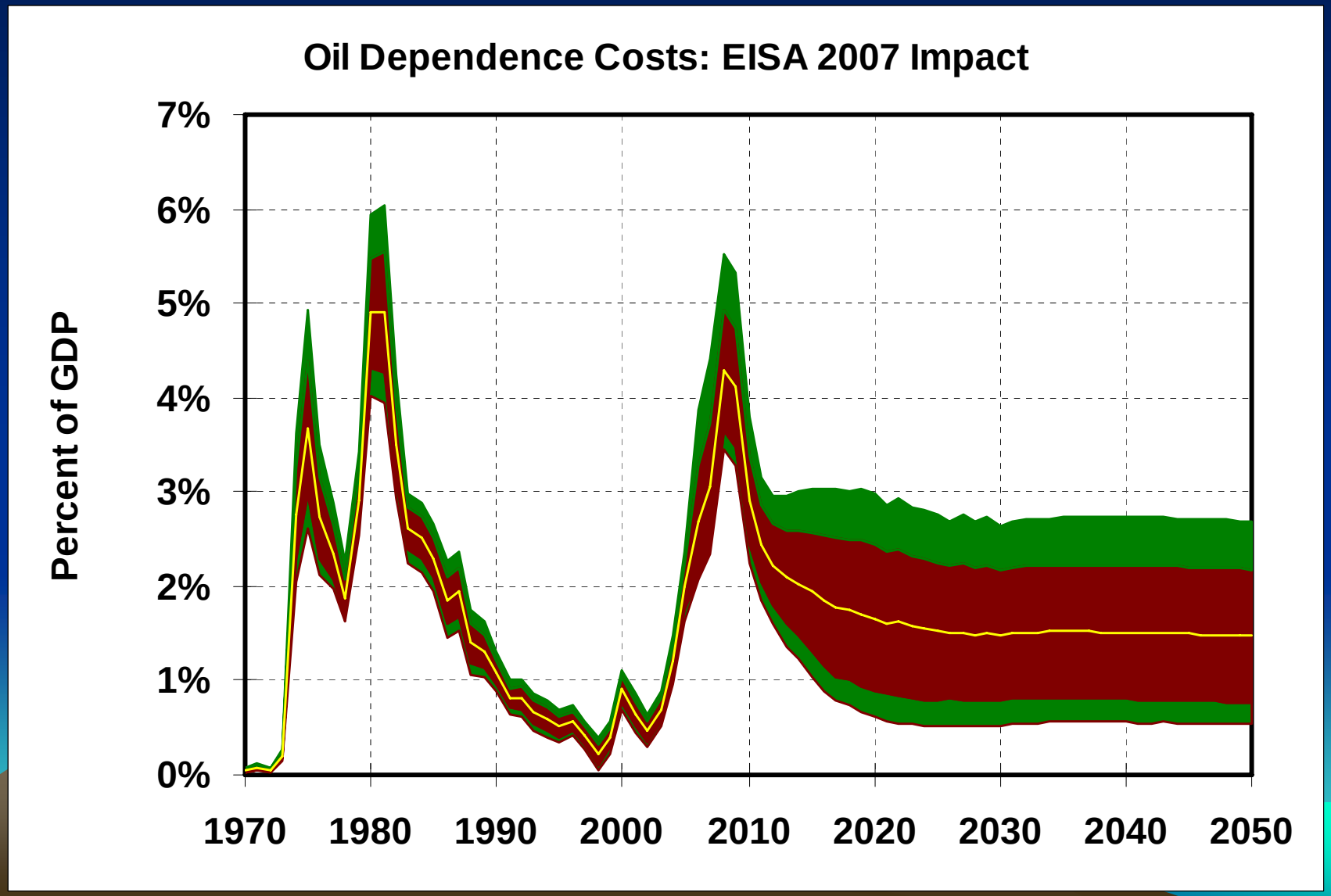
Reduce LDV fuel use by almost 3 mmbd.



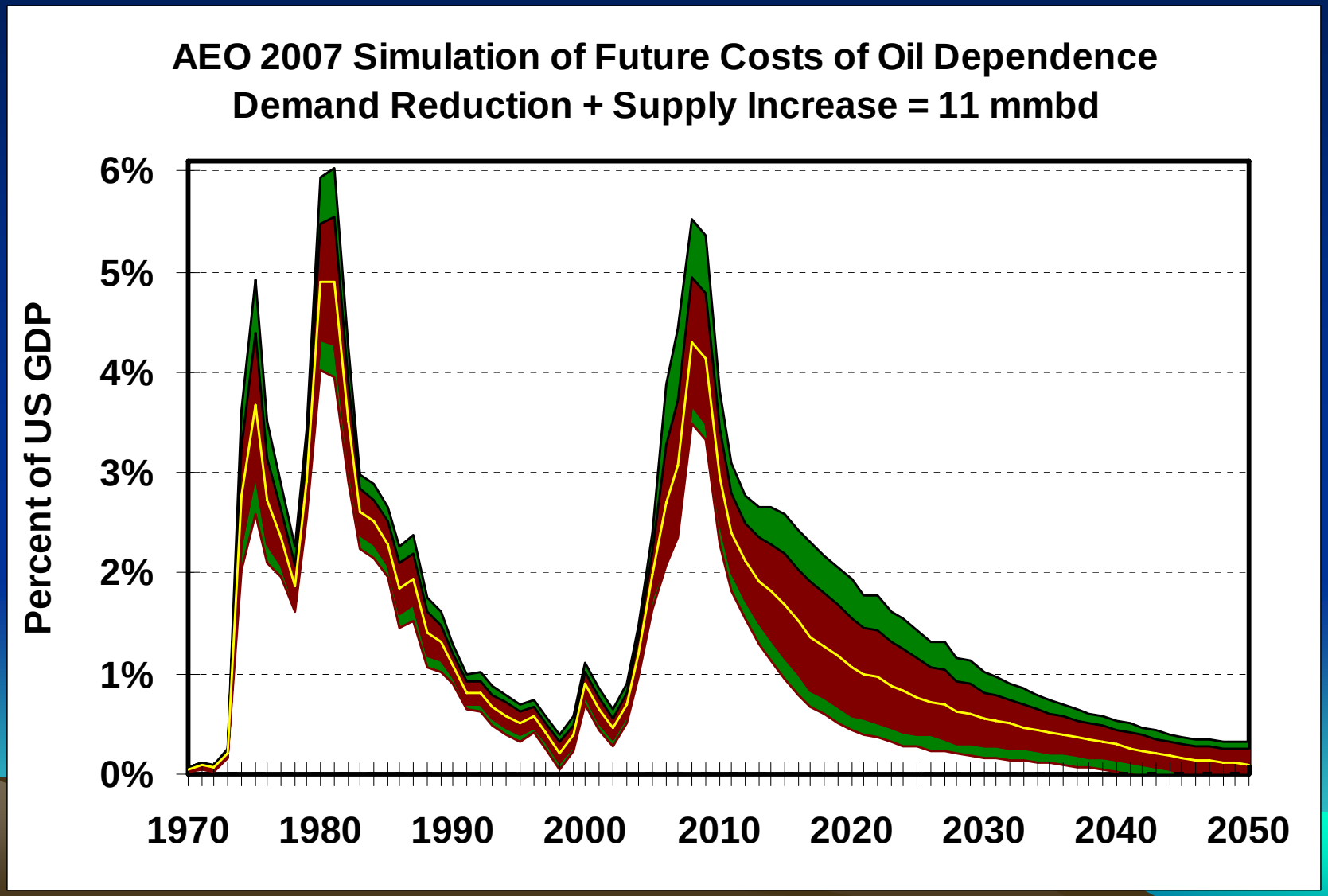
What will EISA accomplish?
Increase biofuel use by 1.5 mmbd oil eq.



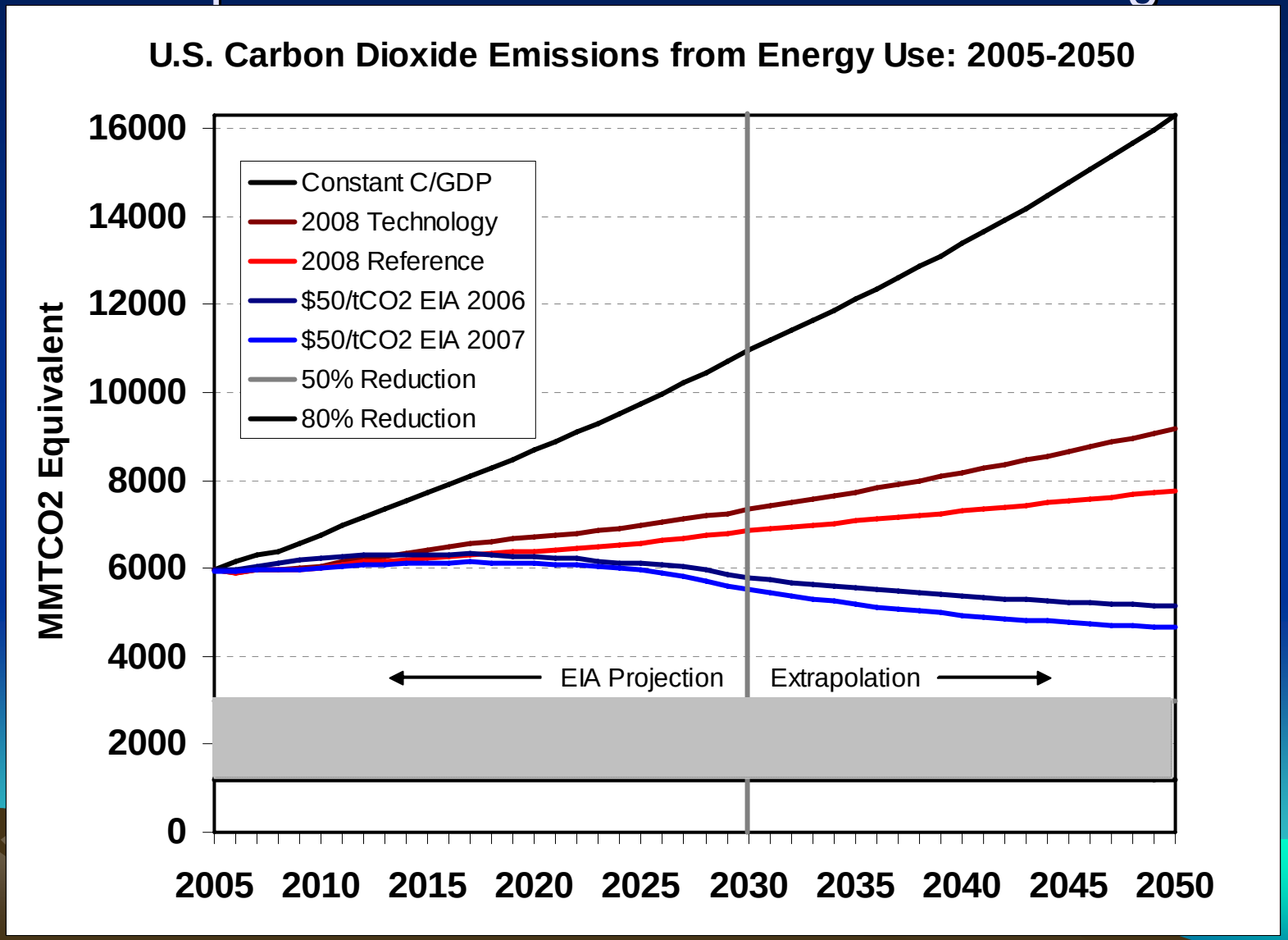
The EISA of 2007 will reduce expected costs by almost ½% of GDP and decreases the 95th percentile by 1%. Good but not nearly enough…



“Oil independence” requires an 11 mmbd change in the U.S. petroleum balance by 2030. Reference 27 mmbd of consumption and 10 mmbd of production in 2030.



EIA: Even with a $50/ton price on CO_2 emissions *AND* carbon capture and storage *AND* lots of nuclear power we will not reach our GHG goals.



Scientists have identified 11 “essential energy technologies” for meeting greenhouse gas mitigation and oil independence goals. **Which will succeed?**

- Carbon capture and storage
- Nuclear power
- Wind
- Solar
- **Biomass**
- **Electric drive vehicles (FCV, PHEV, Battery EV)**
- **Transportation energy efficiency**
- Buildings energy efficiency
- Industrial energy efficiency
- Efficient electricity generation and transmission
- Advanced fossil liquid fuels

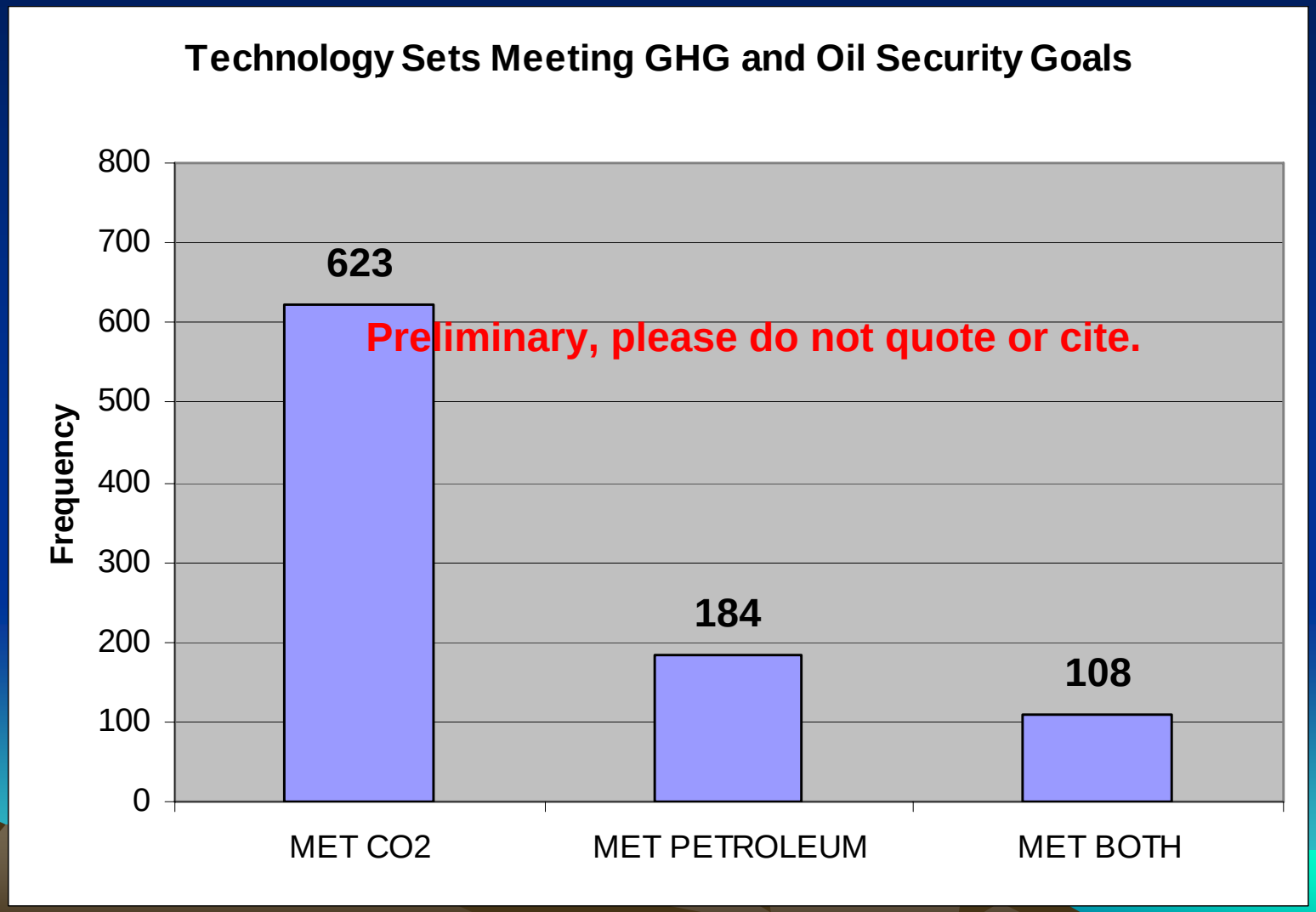
Clearly many individual technologies comprise each of the 11 with much basic science R&D needed to support successful development.

Estimates of potential impacts in 2030 (oil) and 2050 (CO_2) are drawn from studies by NAS, EIA, IEA, IPCC, DOE, MIT, and others.

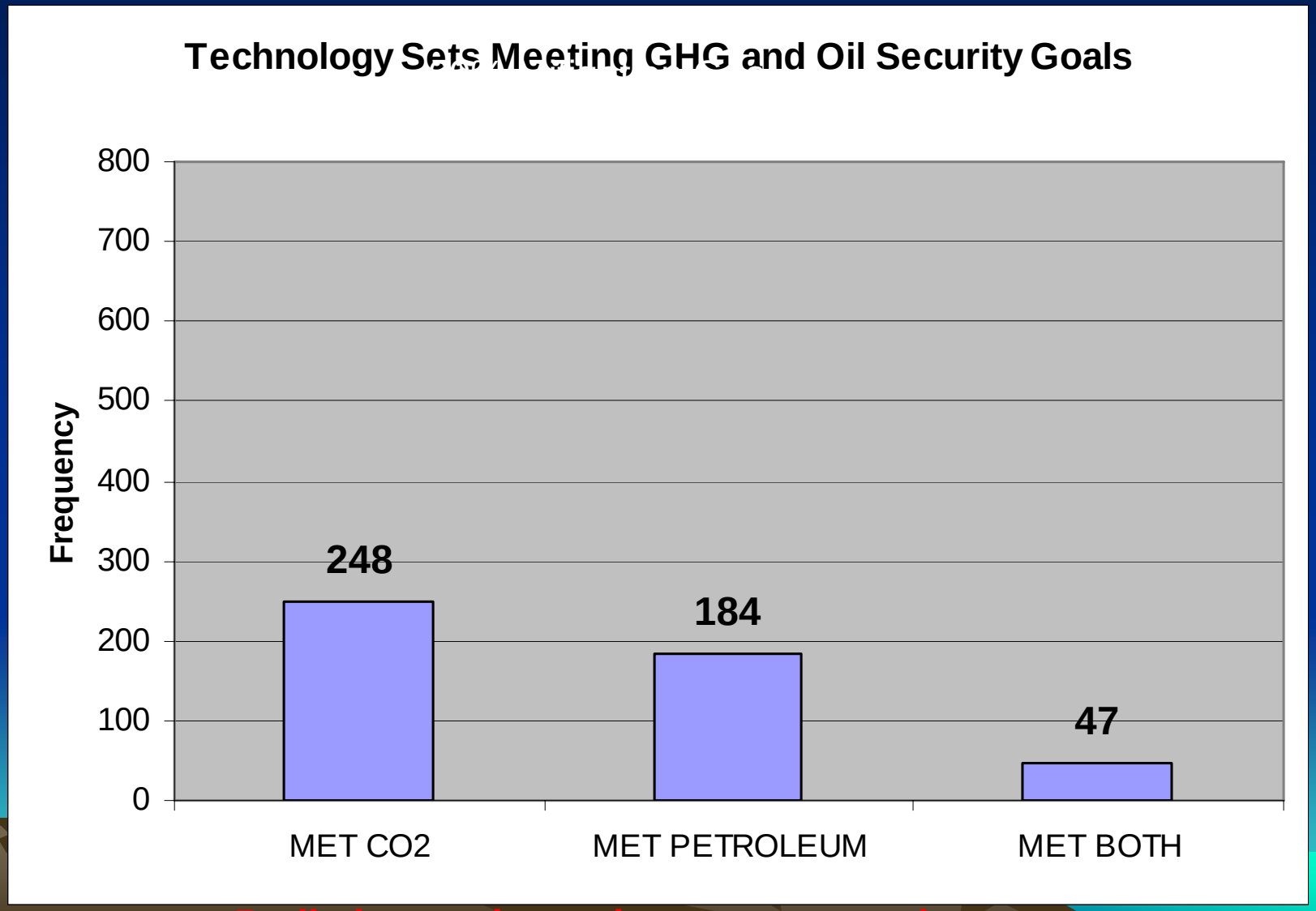
CCS	90% capture, 10% greater energy use
Nuclear	5-fold increase by 2050
Wind	15% of electricity, 2 Quads Industry
Solar	15% of electricity, 2 Q Ind., 1 Q Bldg.
Biomass	Added: 8 Q Elect., 9 Q Industry by 2050, Trans. 3 Q by 2030, 7.5 Q by 2050
Electric drive	Displace 2.5 Q by 2030, 13 Q by 2050
Trans. Efficiency	Reduce energy intensity 22% by 2030, 33% by 2050 (Over AEO 2008 Tech Case)
Bldgs. Efficiency	50% EI reduction by 2050, no oil by 2030
Industry Efficiency	20% reduction in EI by 2030, 25% by 2050
Eff. Electric Gen.	30% system wide efficiency improvement
Adv. Fossil Liquids	10 Q in 2030 and 2050

Preliminary, please do not quote or cite.

If the mitigation goal is a 50% reduction over 600 combinations of the 11 technologies (out of 2,048) could meet it. But just over 100 could achieve both.

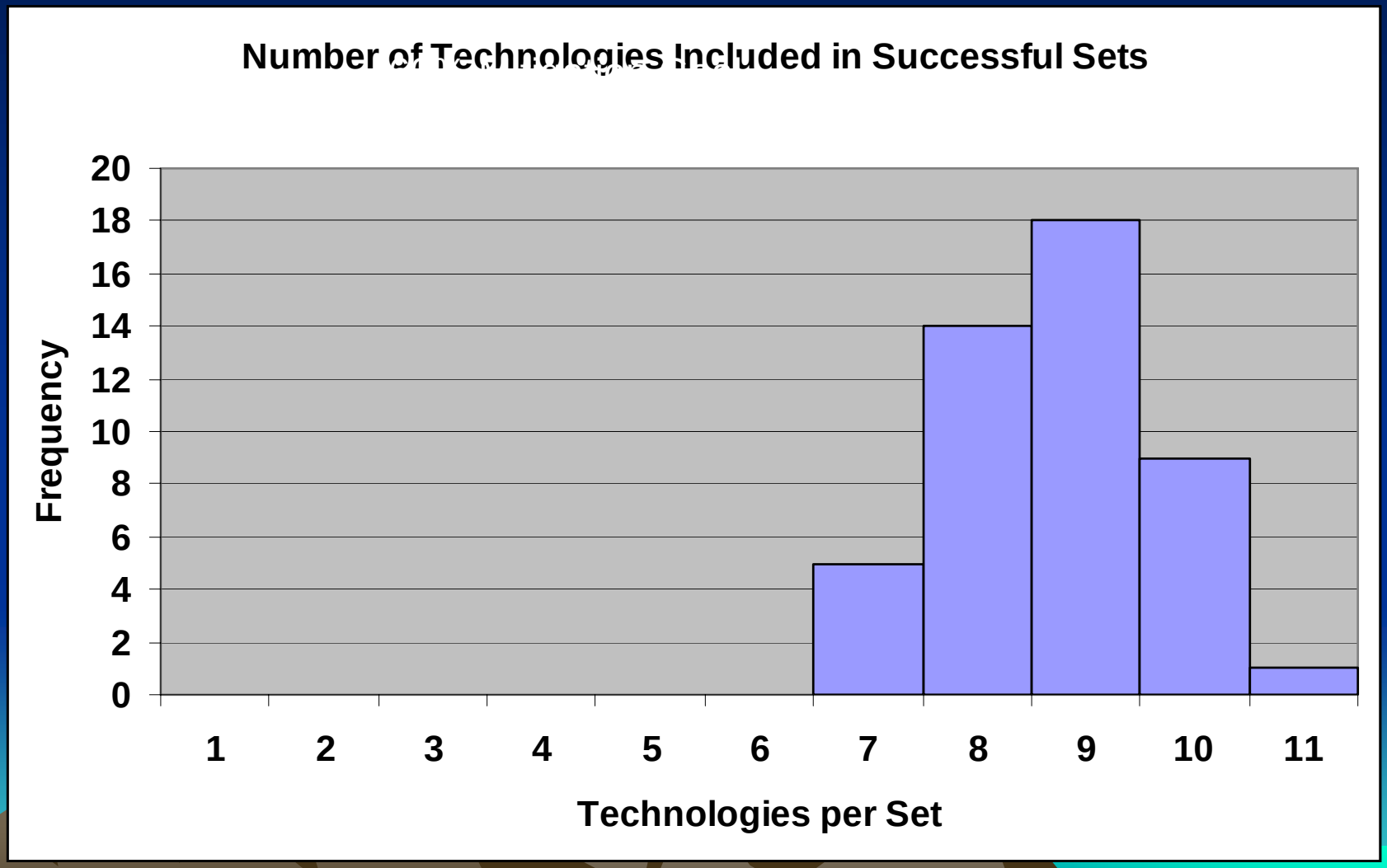


If the mitigation goal is 60%, 47 sets succeed. The level of certainty required for any single technology is over 70%.



Preliminary, please do not quote or cite.

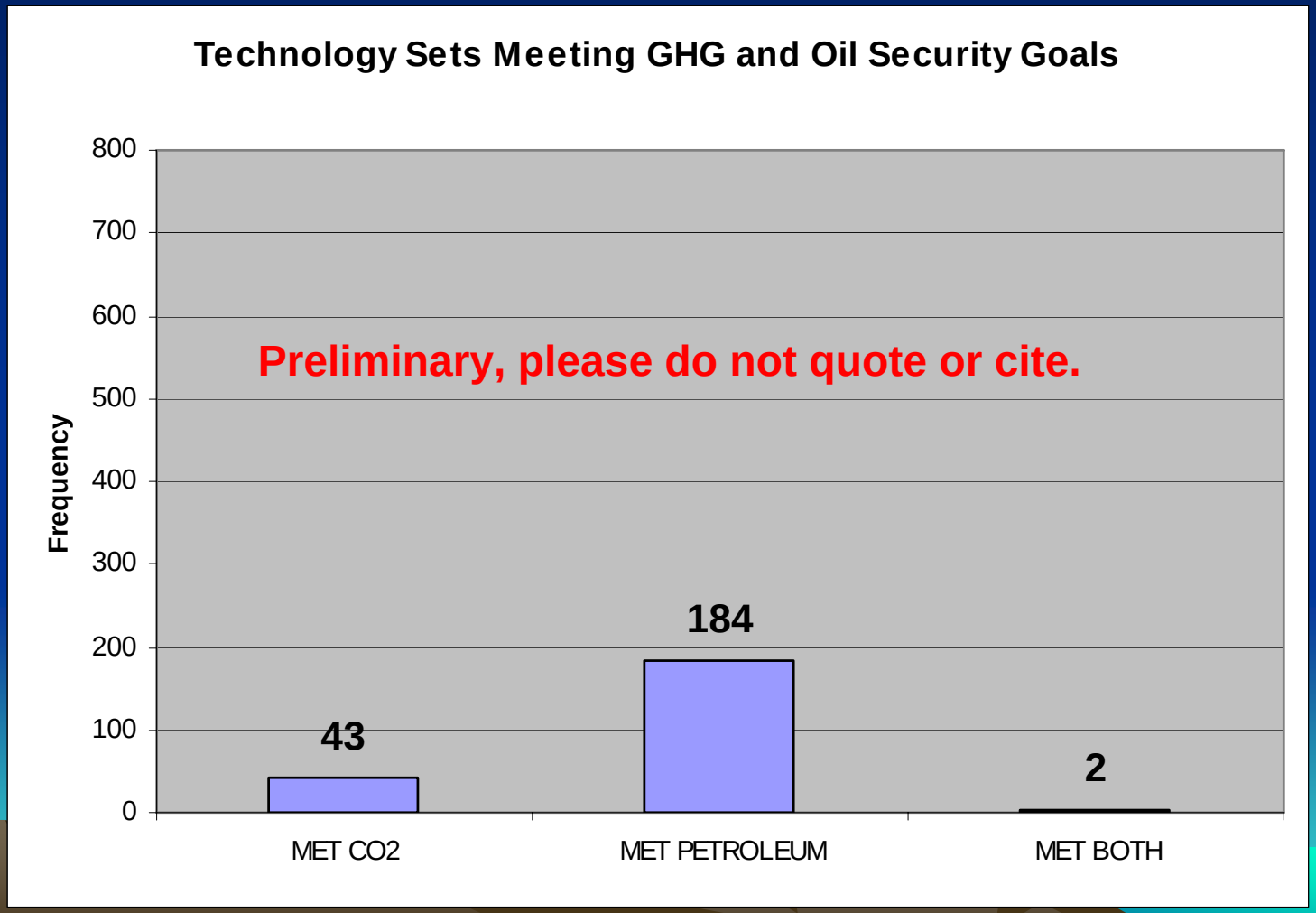
To meet the 60% goal a large fraction of the eleven essential technologies must succeed.



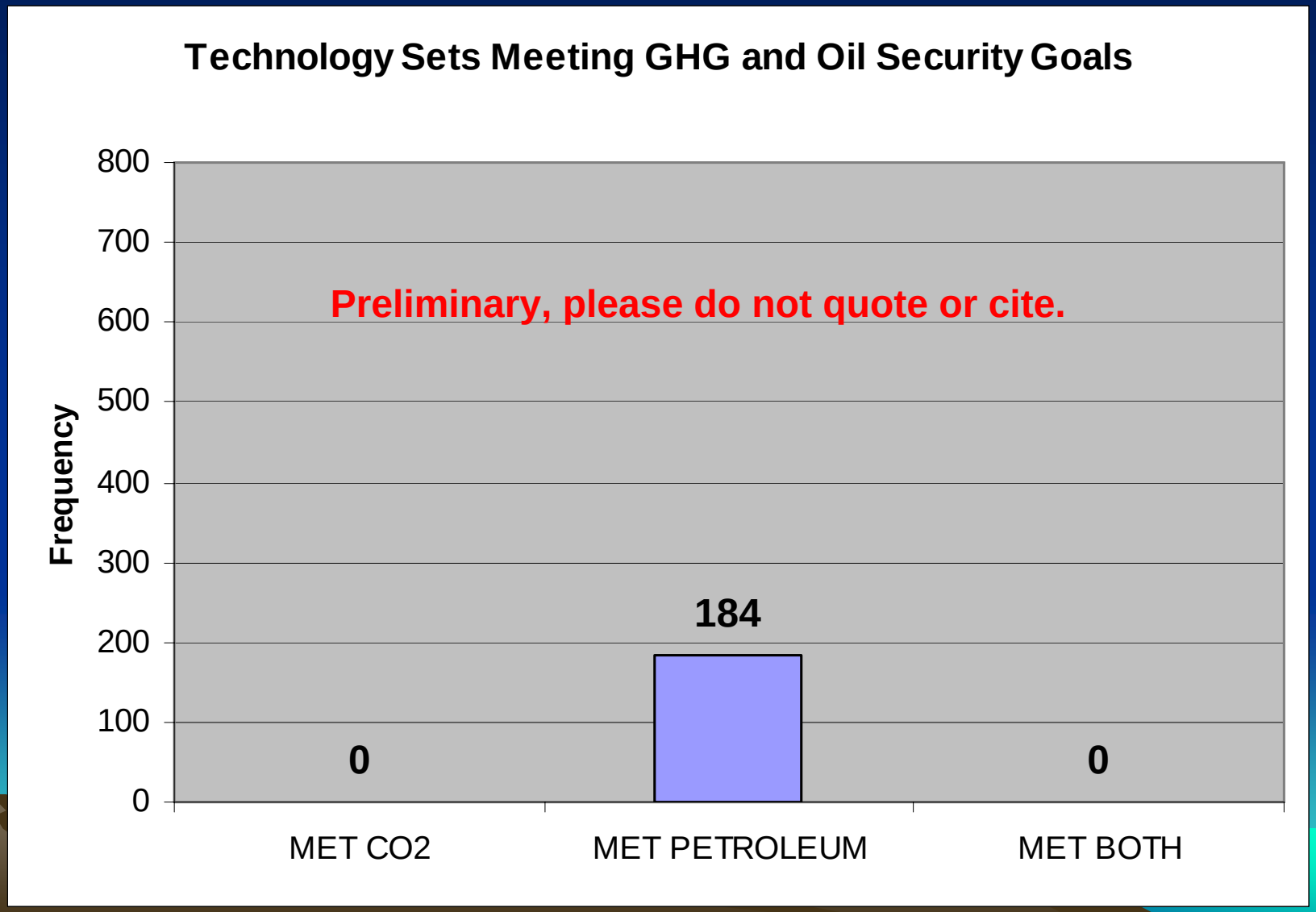
Preliminary, please do not quote or cite.

Only two sets can meet both goals when the mitigation goal is -70%: ALL and ALL minus efficient electricity generation & distribution.

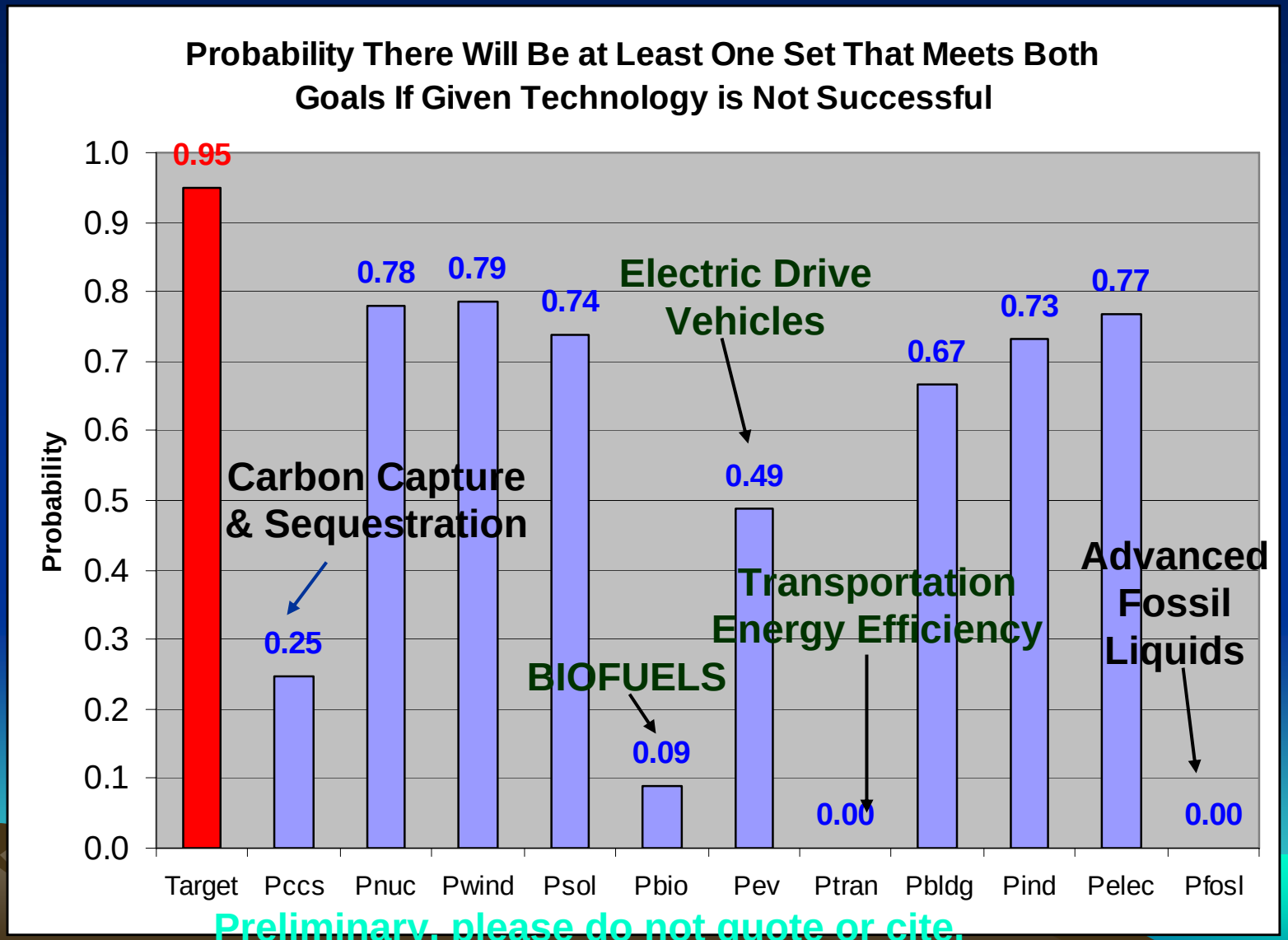
We must be 98% certain of any one's success.



No sets meet the 80% mitigation goal. (Preliminary and conditional)



Certain technologies are ***essential*** to meeting our Climate and Energy Security goals.



Preliminary, please do not quote or cite.

We have little chance of meeting our critically important energy goals without completely transforming the way our transportation system uses energy.

Every gallon of petroleum we displace protects our economy and improves our energy security.

Every megajoule of alternative energy brings us closer to the transition to sustainable energy.

What we are doing now is not nearly enough but it is just the beginning of sweeping change.

THANK YOU.

News You Can Use: How to Save Money on Gas

These Resources May Help You Cut Down on Your Fuel Expenses

May 23, 2008

abc WORLD NEWS with Charles Gibson

18 comments

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Below are some resources you can use to save money on fuel this holiday weekend:

Where are the lowest gas prices?

(Getty Images)
More Photos

Click **here** for a map of cheap gas near the routes you may be driving. Pick the kind of fuel you are looking for (regular, mid-grade, premium, diesel as well as a variety of alternative fuels) and enter your location to find the cheapest gas in your area.

Gasbuddy.com provides the cheapest gas in both list and map form. Just enter your zip code or your city and state **here**.

Ten fuel-saving tips

You can maximize your fuel savings by changing the way you drive. Refraining from accelerating or braking too hard can boost your fuel economy by 20 percent. Click **here** for the top 10 fuel-saving tips that could help your fuel last a bit longer.

Habits that will help you save money on gas

Did you know that simple steps like inflating your tires and keeping your engine tuned can help you save money on gas, while some so-called gas-savings gadgets can actually hurt you? **CLICK HERE** for more tips from the Federal Trade Commission on how to pump more miles out of each gallon.

Are you taking advantage of coupons available for discounts on gas? Have you considered creating an office Web site so you and your coworkers can carpool to work? **Here** are some ideas for lowering your fuel expenses.

Visit **www.fueleconomy.gov** for tips on how to drive more efficiently and keep your car in good shape.

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AS SEEN ON TV: Gas Prices Keeping You Off the Road?
Your lifestyle may be going down as fuel prices go up. Talk to ABC News.

• AS SEEN ON TV: Gas Prices Keeping You Off the Road?

11 mileage-obsessed questions

It's never been easy to buy a car, but with soaring gas prices, you may have a lot more to ask about what's best for you. Here are the answers.

Following convention

Question: How do I get a deal on a conventional car with decent fuel economy?

Answer: First consult fueleconomy.gov to narrow your list of potential cars based on mileage; then check Kelley Blue Book's "New Car Blue Book Value," the price these autos are really selling for now.

Stick with vehicles going for less than sticker, generally those in the 30-mpg-and-under range. Pick three and check them on CarsDirect, which allows you to select specific trim and options, then see an offer price from a local dealer.

- Send feedback to Money Magazine

Next e-mail Internet managers at up to eight local dealers, telling them about that quote and asking if they can beat it. (These people usually cut to the chase fast.) Go for a second round with your new low. Ideally you'll end up under Blue Book Value

More from Money Magazine

- 6 sippin' hybrid alternatives
- Best cities to ride out a gas crunch
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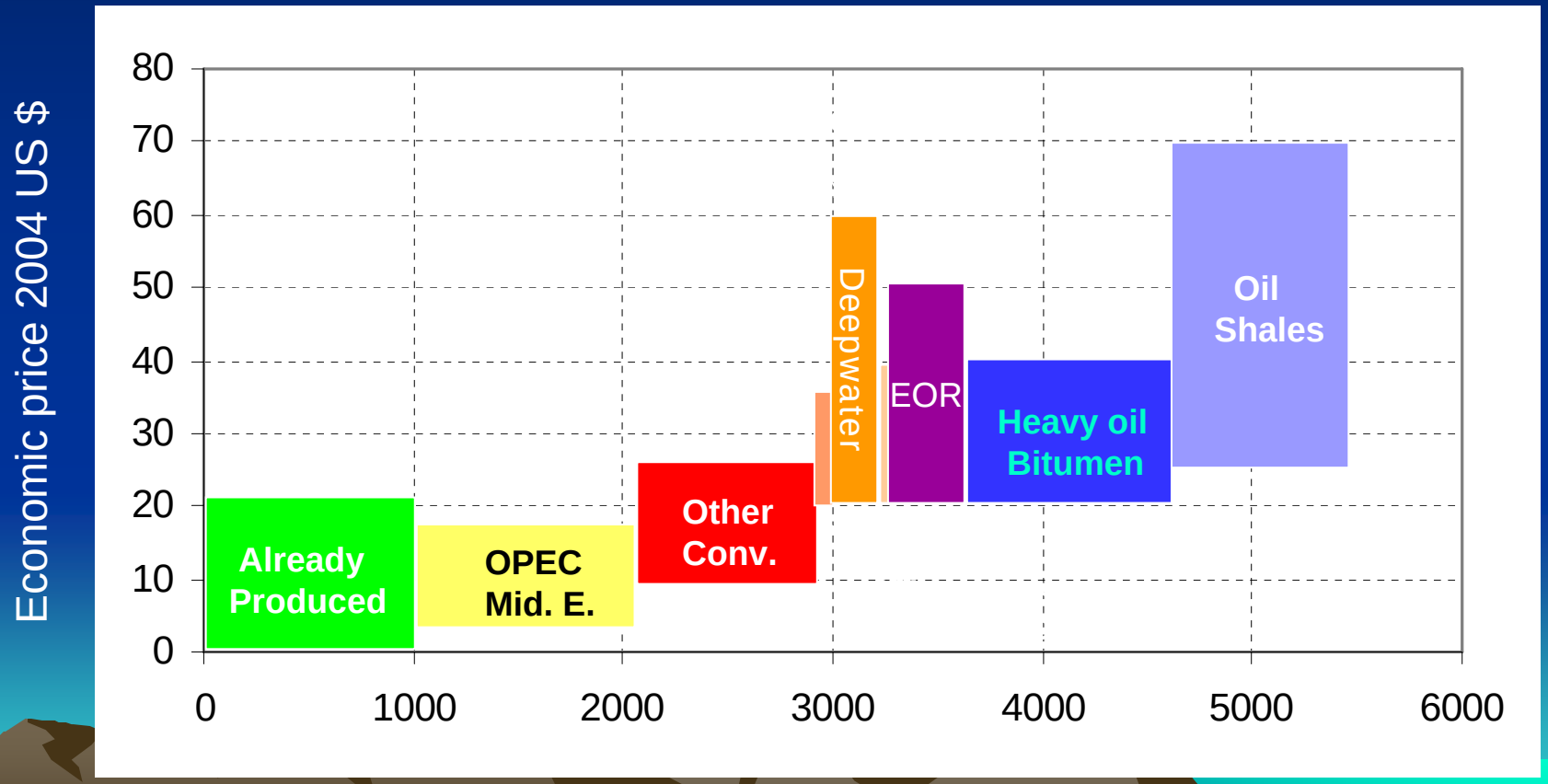
Going beyond oil

The Saudi government is planning four new cities to serve its exploding population and make its economy less dependent on oil.

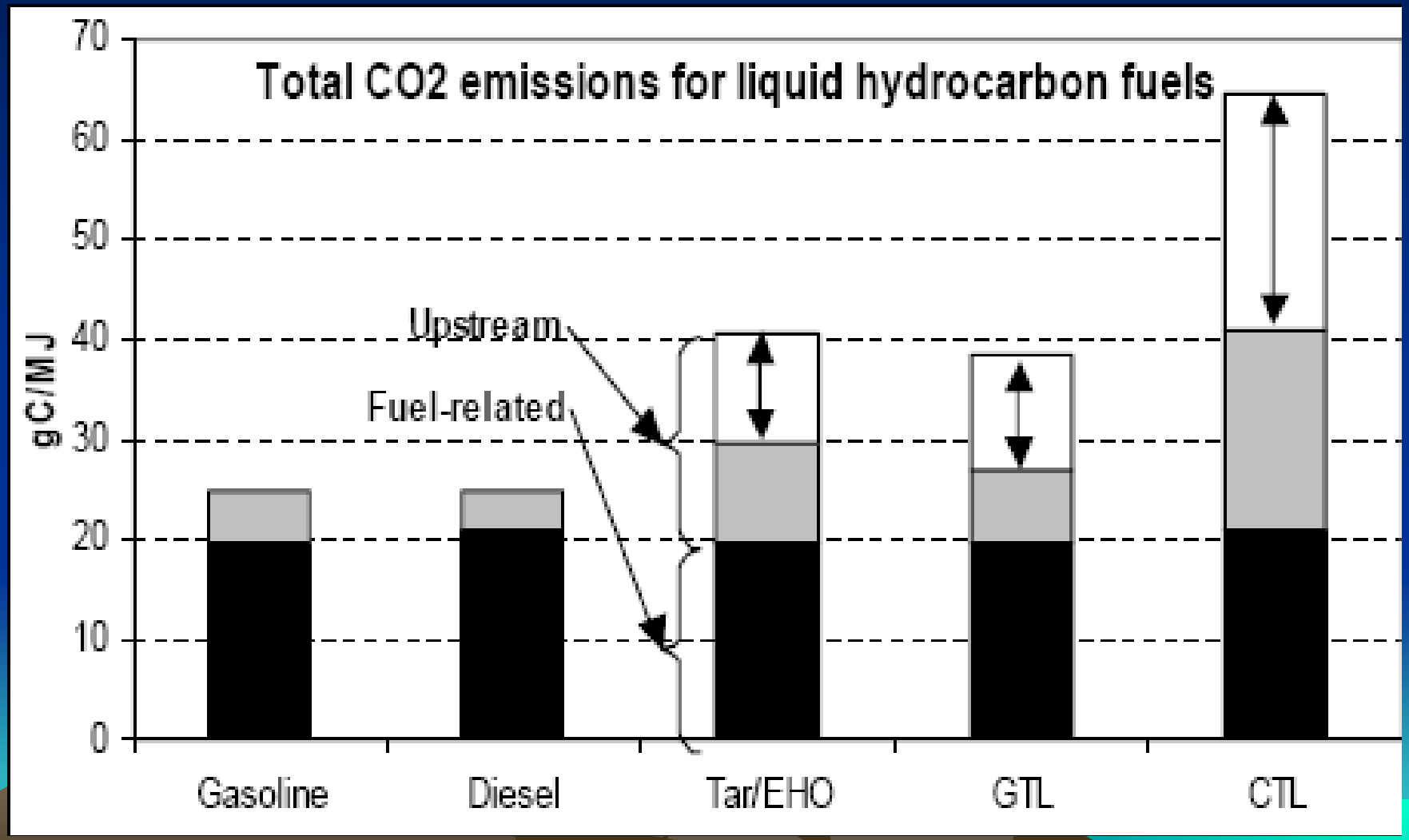
(More)

The path of least resistance? Unconventional oil and coal resources are vast, compatible with the existing infrastructure, at prices we are willing to pay.

IEA "Resources to Reserves" 2005



But without carbon capture and storage, unconventional oil and liquid fuels from coal will produce 20% to 100% more greenhouse gas emissions.



Source: Farrell, 2006.

Just as important, we were a primary source for major news media…

Finally, MPG Numbers You Can Believe

We test the new fuel economy standards

By Rick Newman

"Your mileage may vary." For years, carmakers have put those words next to the gas-mileage figures they claim in ads and brochures, acknowledging an open industry secret: The numbers were bunk. Until this year, those mileage estimates, generated by the Environmental Protection Agency, had been based on tests developed in the 1970s—when engines were simpler and there were fewer onboard computers and other devices that drew power and lowered mileage. The advent of hybrids finally revealed how outdated the standards had become; the Toyota Prius, for example, received an EPA rating of 60 mpg in city driving, even though most users—including one of the EPA's own top officials—got real-world mileage in the 40s.

The EPA has retooled its mileage standards, starting with cars for the 2008 model year—and gotten it right, according to an informal *U.S. News* test. We calculated the mileage for five different test cars driven recently, with more than 200 miles logged in each. In three of those cars, the real-world mileage exceeded the EPA's new estimates, while one was about spot on and one was slightly below. And we tend to favor sporty motoring, which means that drivers with a lighter foot might routinely beat the advertised numbers.

While '08 models are the first to be sold with the new estimates, the EPA's website, *www.fueleconomy.gov*, provides both old and new numbers for cars going back several years—allowing used-car shoppers to get more accurate information, too. In most cases, the new figures are about 10 percent lower, or a 2-to-3-mpg difference. For hybrids and other high-mileage vehicles, the difference can be 8 or 9 mpg. And that eye-popping 60 mpg for the Prius has been revised down to 46. Prius buyers might feel duped—but they can take heart from their role in forcing a rare government retraction. ●

MILEPOSTS

Real-world fuel economy vs. EPA estimates

CAR	NEW EPA ESTIMATE	REAL-WORLD MILEAGE	PERCENT ABOVE/BELOW
Volkswagen Touareg	14	18.1	29.3
Saturn Vue	18	17.2	-4.4
Cadillac STS	20	21.8	9.0
Subaru Impreza WRX	21	22.5	7.1
Audi A4	24	24	0.0

Sources: EPA, U.S. News estimates

On the Web: Efficient cars with muscle at www.usnews.com/muscle

major network websites…

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Monday, July 07, 2008

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Travel Tips to Combat Fuel Cost

Get Expert Travel Tips From These Resources

July 3, 2008

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With gas prices skyrocketing this summer, the following links offer information on how to make the most of your money while traveling on a budget.

Check out these tips on how to make the most out of your travel before you hit the road. (Robert Warren/Stone/Getty Images)

•If you're flying, and flexible about your destination, sign up for weekly e-mails from carriers that alert you to last-minute low fares; cheapflights.com also offers this service.

•If you're driving, Triple-A can calculate how much your gas will cost beforehand.

• Before you fill up, check out gas saving Web sites, like gasbuddy.com and gaspricewatch.com. These sites map the stations along your route with the cheapest gas prices. You can even get cell phone updates, to limit unnecessary stops.

•Also check out Gasbuddy.com's 'Top Ten Fuel Saving Tips.'

Related

Tricks to Make Summer Travel Cheaper

WATCH: Vacationing Around the Corner

Traveler's Dozen: 12 Sizzling Summer Deals

• At speeds above 60 mph, fuel efficiency decreases rapidly. Fueleconomy.gov offers tips to make the most of your gasoline, by driving the speed limit, using cruise-control and avoiding idling.

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WATCH: Man Invades Home Dressed In BBQ Sauce

WATCH: Fingers Severed During Tug-of-War

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Santa Barbara County fire has burned dozens of homes. About 330 fires rage in Calif.

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Your 6 biggest money problems, solved

Real Simple gives a step-by-step plan on how to take charge of your funds

By Elizabeth Fenner
Real Simple
TODAY
updated 10:37 a.m. ET, Mon., March. 10, 2008

You know you should be taking better care of your money. And you'll start. Really you will. Right after you've cooked dinner, helped the kids with their homework and walked the dog. (Ooh, "Grey's Anatomy" is on.)

For many of us, "manage finances" is right down there with "clean out the basement" on the bottomless "to-do" list. We put it off until life is less hectic. But with headlines screaming about the housing meltdown, skyrocketing fuel costs — even a bona fide recession — chances are your money problems feel more urgent now than ever.

Well, help is here. Real Simple polled readers on the financial matters that worry them most, then created a completely doable, low-stress action plan for dealing with each irksome issue, from overspending to underbudgeting.

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Solving your money worries
March 10: Kristin Van Ogtrop of Real Simple magazine and author Stacey Tisdale discuss how you can conquer your financial fears.

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Worry 3: I'm frustrated by high gas prices
Energy prices, in general, are on the rise, but the most dramatic spike has been for gasoline — up one-third over the past year, to an average $3.05 a gallon. If commuting to work by bike is unrealistic, consider these options. (For excellent tips on how to reduce all your home-energy costs, read the advice here.)

Do right now:
Go to gasbuddy.com and enter your ZIP code. You'll be connected to a network of Web sites that pinpoint which gas stations near you charge the lowest and highest prices. For example, a recent search of the Chicago area found a Marathon station in Oak Forest charging just $2.91 a gallon, vs. $3.53 at a downtown BP. Plan your next fill-up accordingly.

Clean out the junk in your trunk. Hauling around unneeded poundage — a case of water, tools, a spare stroller — forces your car to work harder. A hundred extra pounds in the trunk reduces fuel economy by up to 2 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). If you spend $200 a month on gas, shedding that weight can save you $48 a year.

Next steps:
Check your oil, air filter and tire pressure. Keeping your car well-tuned can increase fuel efficiency by up to 17 percent, according to the DOE.

Treat your car like your skin. Keep it out of the sun whenever possible. That's because gasoline can evaporate right out of the tank (especially when the cap isn't screwed on tight), and it evaporates faster when the car is hotter. So always drive straight into the garage, rather than parking in the driveway. When doing errands, park in the shade or in a parking garage.

Buy a fuel-efficient car. When it's time to replace the car you have, go to the DOE-run Web site fueleconomy.gov. There you can compare the fuel efficiency of various models. You'll find, for example, that driving a small hybrid car (average purchase cost: $22,000) for 25 miles costs $1.60 in gas, compared with about $5 for a basic four-wheel-drive SUV (average cost: $31,000). If you drive 10,000 miles a year, your savings would be nearly $1,400.

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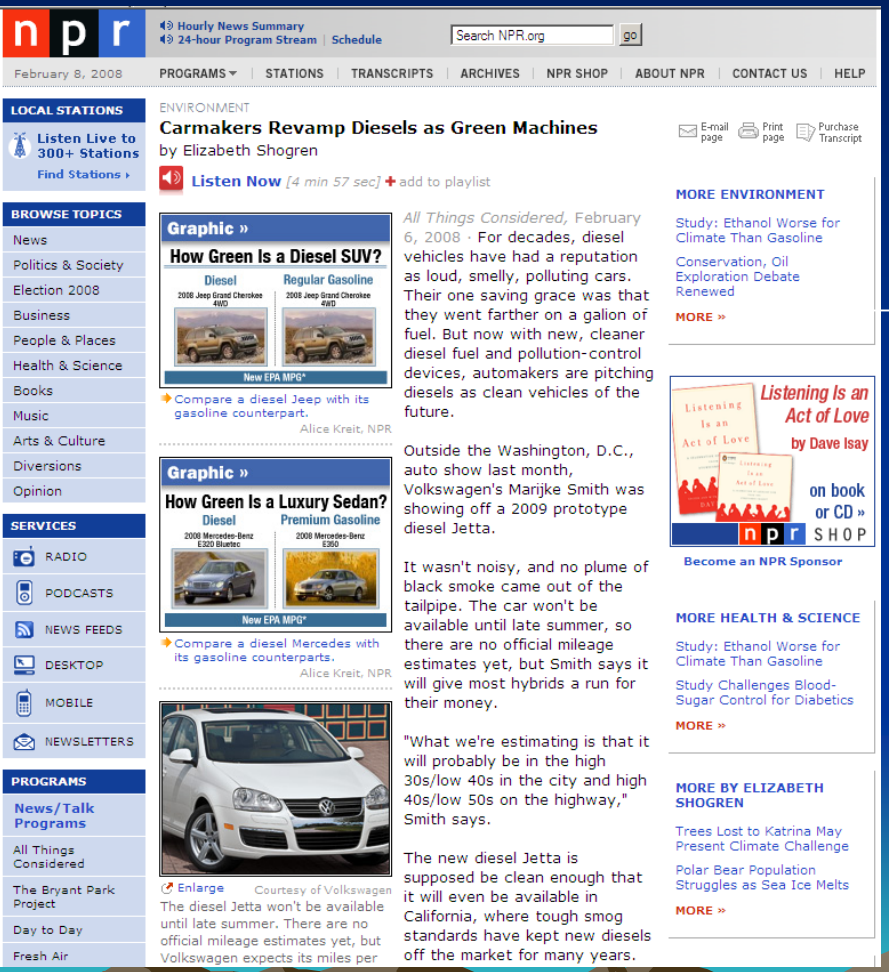

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Enlarge Courtesy of Volkswagen
The diesel Jetta won't be available until late summer. There are no official mileage estimates yet, but Volkswagen expects its miles per

All Things Considered, February 6, 2008 · For decades, diesel vehicles have had a reputation as loud, smelly, polluting cars. Their one saving grace was that they went farther on a gallon of fuel. But now with new, cleaner diesel fuel and pollution-control devices, automakers are pitching diesels as clean vehicles of the future.

Outside the Washington, D.C., auto show last month, Volkswagen's Marijke Smith was showing off a 2009 prototype diesel Jetta.

It wasn't noisy, and no plume of black smoke came out of the tailpipe. The car won't be available until late summer, so there are no official mileage estimates yet, but Smith says it will give most hybrids a run for their money.

"What we're estimating is that it will probably be in the high 30s/low 40s in the city and high 40s/low 50s on the highway," Smith says.

The new diesel Jetta is supposed be clean enough that it will even be available in California, where tough smog standards have kept new diesels off the market for many years.

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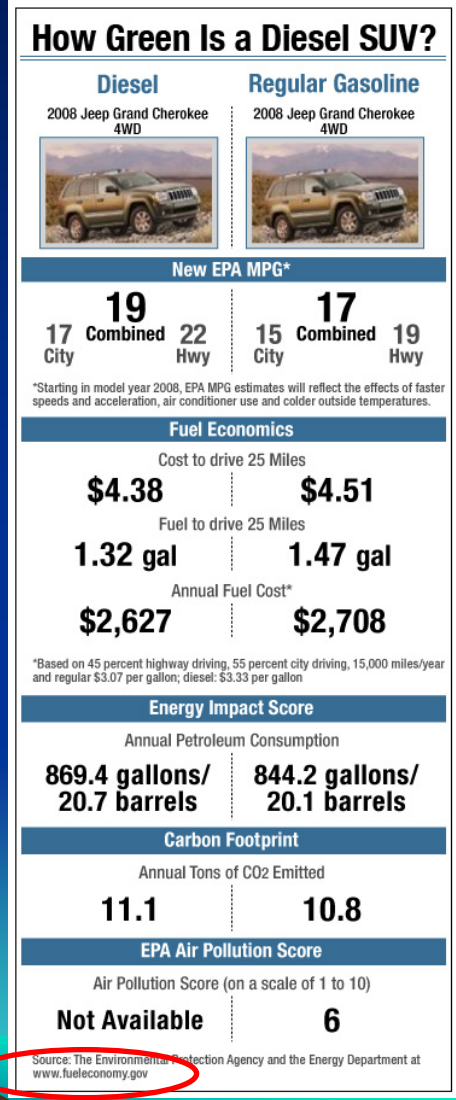

How Green Is a Diesel SUV?

	Diesel	Regular Gasoline
	2008 Jeep Grand Cherokee 4WD	2008 Jeep Grand Cherokee 4WD
New EPA MPG*		
Combined	19	17
City	17	15
Hwy	22	19
Fuel Economics		
Cost to drive 25 Miles	$4.38	$4.51
Fuel to drive 25 Miles	1.32 gal	1.47 gal
Annual Fuel Cost*	$2,627	$2,708
Energy Impact Score		
Annual Petroleum Consumption	869.4 gallons/ 20.7 barrels	844.2 gallons/ 20.1 barrels
Carbon Footprint		
Annual Tons of CO_2 Emitted	11.1	10.8
EPA Air Pollution Score		
Air Pollution Score (on a scale of 1 to 10)	Not Available	6

*Starting in model year 2008, EPA MPG estimates will reflect the effects of faster speeds and acceleration, air conditioner use and colder outside temperatures.

*Based on 45 percent highway driving, 55 percent city driving, 15,000 miles/year and regular $3.07 per gallon; diesel: $3.33 per gallon

Source: The Environmental Protection Agency and the Energy Department at www.fueleconomy.gov

newspapers…

Fuel Efficient Vehicle Tax Incentives Information Center

Find out how you can save money through Federal tax incentives on your purchase of a new hybrid, lean-burn, alternative fuel, and electric vehicles!

Hybrids

Current Tax Credits

Tax Deductions for Hybrids Placed in Service Before 2006

Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs)

Current Tax Credits

Tax Deductions for AFVs Placed in Service Before 2006

New Energy Tax Credits for Hybrids

Hybrids purchased or placed into service after December 31, 2005 may be eligible for a federal income tax credit of up to $3,400.

Credit amounts begin to phase out for a given manufacturer once it has sold over 60,000 eligible vehicles.

Ford | GM | Honda | Nissan | Toyota | All

Vehicle Make & Model	Full Credit	Phase Out 50%	Phase Out 25%
Toyota	Jan. 1 – Sep. 30, 2006	Oct. 1, 2006 – Mar. 31, 2007	Apr. 1 – Sep. 30, 2007
2005-07 Prius	$3,150	$1,575	$787.50
2006-07 Highlander Hybrid (2WD & 4WD)	$2,600	$1,300	$650
2006-07 Lexus RX400h (2WD & 4WD)	$2,200	$1,100	$550
2007 Camry Hybrid	$2,600	$1,300	$650
2007 Lexus GS 450h	$1,550	$775	$387.50

Additional Toyota and Lexus Vehicles Certified for the Energy Tax Credit (Sept. 29, 2006)
Toyota Hybrid Begins Phaseout on October 1 (Sept. 20, 2006)
Toyota and Lexus Vehicles Certified for New Energy Tax Credit (April 25, 2006)
Some Toyota and Lexus Vehicles Certified for the New Energy Tax Credit (April 7, 2006)

Source: Internal Revenue Service. Updated March 19, 2007.

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Buying a hybrid vehicle could provide a tax break

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Enlarge Toyota via AP

Tax credits for hybrids are phased out once sales hit 60,000. Anyone who bought the Toyota Prius after Oct. 1, for instance, is not eligible for a credit.

REDUCED TAX CREDITS

How the phaseout of the hybrid tax credit reduced the credit for Toyota hybrids bought in 2007:

	Jan. 1-March 31	April 1-Sept. 30	After Oct. 1
Toyota Prius	$1,575	$787.50	No credit
Highlander hybrid	$1,300	$650	No credit
Lexus RX 400h	$1,100	$550	No credit
Camry hybrid	$1,300	$650	No credit

Source: www.fueleconomy.gov

Remember road trips? You piled all your friends in the car, rolled down the windows and drove until you got to the ocean, stopping only for a quick bite at a Waffle House. If you were older, you piled your family in the station wagon and drove to Grandma's, even if she lived in another time zone.

Sadly, road trips aren't much fun anymore. The average price of a gallon of gas rose to a near-record $3.22 a gallon Monday, and analysts expect prices to continue rising this spring and summer. That means many people can't afford to drive across town, let alone across the country.

Here's one way to lower your gas costs: Buy a more fuel-efficient car.

Saving on gas isn't the only benefit. If you buy a hybrid, which combines an electric motor with a gasoline engine, you may be eligible for a tax credit when you file your taxes next year.

Similarly, if you bought a hybrid last year, you may qualify for a credit on this year's taxes.

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A tax credit is more valuable than a deduction because it represents a dollar-for-dollar reduction in your tax bill. In addition, you don't have to itemize to claim the hybrid tax credit.

But before you start shopping for a hybrid, it's important to understand that the amount of the credit can vary significantly. The credit is based on a formula that measures the vehicle's fuel economy and lifetime fuel savings.

Credits for IRS-certified hybrids range from $250 for the GMC Sierra to $3,000 for the Mazda Tribute. (You can find a complete

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Would You Drive 55?

By WILLIAM SCHULTZ / WASHINGTON — Friday, Jul. 25, 2008

Liberals say Iraq is another Vietnam; conservatives say Barack Obama is Jimmy Carter redux. ABBA's a mega-hit and Elton John's going to be performing at Madison Square Garden. Had enough of these '70s flashbacks? Brace yourself for another: the return of the national speed limit, courtesy of one of the country's most venerable politicians.

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The thinking behind Warner and Speier's speed-limit proposals is simple. At a certain speed, a car's gas mileage begins to drop: the faster you go, the more fuel your burn. Ergo, slow down and save gas. According to fueleconomy.gov, a website run by the Department of Energy, "each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional $0.30 per gallon for gas." Warner approvingly cites a congressional study showing that "the law resulted in reduced consumption of 167,000 barrels of petroleum a day." With millions of more cars on the road now than there were in 1974, the volume saved could be even greater.

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Four Ways To Cut Gas Spending

MarketWatch's Marshall Loeb's Daily Money Tips For Saving You Money At The Pump

NEW YORK, July 10, 2008 Comments 1

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(iStockphoto)

(MarketWatch) By now, most people have gotten used to fueling up their car for over $4 a gallon. That's a steep jump from a year ago, or even from where gas prices stood six months ago.

For most, paying these higher prices means that there's less left over for other purchases. But this doesn't have to be the case. Consider these tips from Don Patrick, managing director of Integrated Financial Group in Atlanta, on how to cut your gas spending:

Use the Internet.
While it may be tempting to drive from station to station looking for the best price, this is ultimately counterproductive. You will end up losing more from wasted gas than on the few pennies you may save on a slightly better price. So before you get in your car, research prices online. One Web site to refer to is gasbuddy.com, which will help you find the cheapest price near you.

Drive efficiently.
Cars operate more efficiently when they're driving in the range of 55 to 65 miles per hour. Driving at these speeds will also reduce the need to brake and accelerate constantly, which wastes fuel. Another idea to keep in mind is to only run the air conditioning at faster speeds. When you're stuck in traffic, turn the AC off and roll down the windows.

Cut down your carbon footprint.
Whenever possible, ride a bike or walk. If there are people from your office who live near you, try to set up a carpool. You'll still get to your destination, only with less money spent on gas.

Buy a more fuel-efficient car.
There are many fuel-efficient cars on the market now, including hybrids and smaller cars. You can refer to the U.S. Department of Energy's Fuel Economy site, fueleconomy.gov, or the EPA's Green Vehicle Guide, epa.gov/greenvehicles, for information on which vehicles get the best gas mileage. Also, keep an eye out for promotions from car manufacturers. Some manufacturers and dealers are offering guaranteed fixed rates on gas or even free gas for a year or two when you buy a new car.

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The right way to buy a fuel sipper

Look beyond city and highway numbers at the real costs and at your real needs.

By Peter Valdes-Dapena, CNNMoney.com staff writer
Last Updated: April 3, 2008: 10:29 AM EDT

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NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- Sky-high gas prices bring fuel economy front and center when it comes to buying a new car. But if you're not careful, your bargain gas-sipper could wind up costing you a lot more in the long-run.

"There's an element of penny-wise, pound foolish in all of this," says Jack Nerad, managing editor of Kelley Blue Book.

Getting started

The best tool for looking at fuel economy numbers is fueleconomy.gov. Operated jointly by the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency, the site gives you the EPA-estimated city and highway fuel economy numbers for all mass-market passenger cars and trucks sold in the U.S.

COURTESY: GENERAL MOTORS

The 2008 Saturn Vue Green Line uses a low-cost mild-hybrid system that offers surprising fuel economy benefits.

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Should There Be a National Speed Limit?

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July 18, 2008

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The Department of Energy reports that easing up on the gas pedal could ease gas prices.

Congress is considering instituting a national speed limit at 55 miles per hour to save gasoline and reduce fuel prices.
(AP Photo)

While a 55 mph speed limit could save money, some highway patrol police say drivers won't change their habits.

- Advocacy groups such as drive55.org support a national speed limit because it says it will save the planet, increase energy independence and ensure passenger safety. To read more on this side of the debate, check out, "Speed Limits: How Should They be Determined?"

Do you believe there should be a national speed limit? VOTE NOW.

Fuel Efficiency Tips:

- Fueleconomy.gov offers tips to make the most of your gasoline by driving the speed limit, using cruise-control and avoiding idling.

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