Aardgas Mobiel to endorse Dutch NGV industry in three-steps strategy

Today, the Dutch NGV industry is “on the move”. One of the main supporters is Aardgas Mobiel, a coalition made up by all parties interested in automotive, fuelling stations, NG distribution, and other stakeholders. It carries out nationwide and regional (provincial, district) marketing activities in order to lobby the national and provincial government, as well as the municipalities. The coalition consists of several partners as follows:

• Energy firms: Essent, E.ON Benelux, RWE
• Construction company: Ballast Namdam
• OEM NGVs: Citroën, Fiat, Iveco Irisbus, MAN, Mercedes, Opel, Renault, Volkswagen;
• Fuelling station operator: CNG Net;
• Car lease company: Athlon, Leaseplan, Arval/BNP Paribas

Established in September 2007, Aardgas Mobiel supports the establishment and expansion of CNG fuelling network, and informs the target markets regarding the wide availability of CNG vehicles and that using NG as (a clean) vehicle fuel is a sensible option. The goal of Aardgas Mobiel is to obtain a breakthrough in the use of NG as vehicle fuel, in which private car owners will choose NGVs.

The coalition learns a lot from the story of Germany—its neighbouring country—and uses it as an example country to stimulate NGV in the Netherlands.

During an interview with The GVR, Ton Smit, the Chairman of Aardgas Mobiel expressed his optimism. “The time is right! Both 2008 and 2009 will be good years for the CNG industry. Environment is a big issue nowadays. Awareness on this subject is increasing,” said Smit. According to the CIA World Fact Book, “air pollution from vehicles” is one of current main environmental issues in the Netherlands. “Car companies are interested in bringing NGVs to the Netherlands,” noted Smit.

Expansion of fuelling network

Aardgas Mobiel expects that 250 stations will be installed in the whole nation, ultimately. Presently, there are 12 CNG stations.

About 30-50 stations are anticipated to be in service in 2008/2009. Smit said that these 30 stations are necessary to bring the NGV industry into life. “Private car owners will understand that, with the presence of 30 stations, the number of CNG fuelling amenities will increase into 100 or more from that point on. Before end of 2009, about 22 new stations should be constructed in Zuid Holland Province, of which 5 stations will be located in Den Haag city. Gelderland Province has allocated a budget for 6 stations of which one station in Arnhem city will be opened soon. Additionally, one station has been opened in Nijmegen city in this province”.

In its endeavour to stimulate the mass utilisation of NGVs, the coalition uses three-step strategy. First, by introducing NGVs at the city level, targeting public vehicles. Second, by approaching regional (district, city and surroundings) small businesses with private vehicle fleets. Third, the mainstream stage, private car owners. This will be “the business part” of the work in which the task of Aardgas Mobiel will include:

• Increasing the awareness of the general public to promote CNG cars through news media;
• Lobbying parliaments and related parties on fiscal level

The coalition expects that the private cars and motorbike tax (bpm) for CNG cars will be reduced.

Nowadays, NG cars are classified in B level in the national energy label. The coalition tries to get an approval for an A level for NG cars to gain a bigger tax deduction. Also, the fiscal tax on lease of CNG cars will be limited to 14% only. Besides, there is an effort to get the government agree to freeze the current CNG fuel tax of 3 Euro cent per kilogram until 2020. Getting more subsidies from more municipalities for the establishment of NG refuelling stations is one of their underlying efforts. The coalition will continue approaching local governments to improve air quality and to incorporate NGVs in the public transport sector. It also encourages related bodies such as investors/station owners and local government to carry out marketing activities in each of their regions. According to Smit, about 80% of cars used for work-related purposes are either from the local area or the surroundings. So, it is a good move to encourage people around the city to buy NGVs in order to improve air quality and to generate revenues for the fuel suppliers.

Aardgas Mobiel is also actively gathering “friends” for NGV-related programmes with NGOs that have the same objective as the organisation, which is to improve air quality.