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Proton Newsletter – March 2026

March 14, 2026

After a hiatus of many months, the Proton Newsletter is back.

My meandering path in the preparation of this issue has been a strange one. Granted, I am the slowest of all newsletter editors, which is a big part of the problem. Back at the beginning of last month, I planned a real splash for the first page of this issue (see image below). 2026 truly was shaping up to be a banner year for LD-FCEVs. There was lots of evidence that we really were climbing out of the "Valley of Death" into a brighter future. Why?

- the Toyota/FirstElement Fuel announcement of a joint venture followed closely by a significant H_2 price drop at the dispensers (up to 28%).
- CA Energy Commission Clean Transportation Program reports reflected that it would be a good year for hydrogen refueling infrastructure funding with a special hydrogen-specific $40 M proposal coming out this month, and a further $22 M proposal set to be released later in the year.
- Chevron just opened its third H_2 station in California (in Carson) on February 23.
- The warm greetings from our compatriots in transportation-hydrogen that we received during CHCOA's trip up the west coast to British Columbia last September.

But the tragic explosion of a hydrogen tube trailer on February 24 changed my plans. First and foremost, our hearts go out to the families of the workers that were killed or injured in the Colton explosion and fire.

The subsequent cessation of much of the hydrogen fuel deliveries in Southern California has severely impacted LD-FCEV drivers, especially in Southern California. Although no one can say for sure, it doesn't seem that the impact will be long term, at least we hope that is the case.

So, I'll keep my crowing about 2026 being a breakout year for a future issue . . .

- Greg Cane

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- - 2026 - -

The Breakout Year for Transportation-Hydrogen

Water to Water

- - -

A Trip on the H2 Highway

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Journey Highlights

By Bobbie Cane

Last September, nine intrepid CHCOA members (Tadashi and Fumi Ogitsu, John Michael Parkan, Nathan Okawa, Brennan Balson, Patsy and Paul Sidio, and Bobbie and Greg Cane, embarked on a fuel cell car journey to Canada[1]. Our goals were:

- To show that fuel cell cars are here to stay,
- To prove that the technology is spreading,
- To connect with other fuel cell car drivers in and outside of CA, and
- To introduce the technology to folks who hadn't ever heard of hydrogen cars.

We are happy to report that we achieved our goals! But, not in as elegant a way as we had originally hoped. As you may know, there are no publicly-accessible H_2 stations farther north than Sacramento in California, none in Oregon and one in Washington State. Happily, British Columbia now has six stations. We had hoped to use mobile fuelers to help us travel through the "hydrogen deserts", but alas, that was not to be. Instead, we hired a company from Southern California called "Fabtrans " who operates deluxe auto transporters, and were very pleased with their service, especially the driver, Andrew, who was very accommodating and lots of fun.

Trip plaque at the Golden Gate
(Photo by Tadashi Ogitsu)

The very first stage of the trip was initiated by four of our Southern California members – Nathan, John Michael, Paul & Patsy, who along with a plaque entitled, "Trip on the Hydrogen Highway" (see picture) drove down to the border of Mexico and then turned north, to show that our trip truly did go from "BC to BC".

Our kickoff in northern California was two-fold, starting with a rally at the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco on a chilly, foggy Friday morning, where long-time fuel cell driver, David Troup, gave a terrific kickoff speech.

From there, we traveled along with several other fuel cell enthusiasts, to Sacramento, where we held another rally on the steps of the Capitol. Speakers there included the impressive John Ackler, Chief of Staff to long-time hydrogen supporter Senator Bob Archuleta, Toyota Engineer Extraordinaire Jackie Birdsall, and the Esteemed Dr. Lew Fulton from U.C. Davis. Concluding this star-studded lineup was our very own Movie Director John Michael.

Once we got underway, our cars were loaded onto the transporter, and the rest of us took a 12-passenger van to carry us to our first destination - the Oregon Capitol in Salem. As the Capitol was under construction, we could only gain permission to display on a street in downtown Salem where admittedly, the crowds were not large. Fortunately, however, a friendly manager of a tourist area, (and an avid enthusiast of H_2 cars) saw our predicament and invited us to display our cars right down the street in front of his indoor carousel where our reception greatly improved!

Great stop by Salem Carousel !

Portland was our next city in OR, where we were invited by the folks at the Renewable Hydrogen Association to display at their annual conference, during an ice cream social hosted by the Hydrogen Fuel Cell Partnership. Wonderful crowd!

While there, Catherine Dunwoody of GO-BIZ gave a great plug for CHCOA in her lunchtime speech.

Once over the border to Washington, we took time out to visit Twin Cities Transit in Chehalis, where we had a good visit with retiring Executive Director Joe Clark as well as the new Exec. Director Josh Nylander; Director of Finance/HR Rebecca Towner, and their staff at their headquarters. We were treated to a tour of their operations and brand new H_2 buses!

Douglas County PUD near East Wenatchee was our next stop - where there is an operating H_2 fuel station selling

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[1] The dream of going from Baja California to British Columbia ("BC to BC") has been kicking around H_2 circles ever since the first such trip happened in 2009 with prototype fuel cell cars.

fuel at the enviable cost of $4.00/Kg. Meaghan and Todd Vibbert, and Gary Ivory and their staff treated us like gold and allowed us to give a presentation (again our John Michael) plus they gave us a tour of their hydrogen production plant, situated in the beautiful Columbia Gorge. The Capitol at Olympia, WA was our last stop in the U.S. where we had a small crowd, but a fantastic setting right next to the Capitol building.

Brennan explains, "What makes it go" at the Portland RHA Conference.

Onward to Canada, where the ferry workers were a little perplexed about our cars, but in the end, could find no reason not to allow hydrogen cars on the ferry. Our setup in Victoria, B.C. could not have been better. We were in view of the Parliament building as we displayed to a very interested crowd along the busy waterfront there. Following that we took another ferry over to Vancouver and were again astounded by the warmth and

Transferring the plaque to our British Columbia hydrogen friends at the Lions Gate Bridge.

welcome of the Canadian H2 folks including Nicolas Hilario from the Canadian H2 Association, Karen Johnston from HTEC, Teddy Townsley from Powertech, and representatives from Ballard Power. A nice-sized crowd assembled there on the beach in view of the beautiful Lions Gate Bridge, and we passed on to them the H2 plaque that had made the long journey from the Mexican Border.

All in all, it was a very successful journey! One item remaining to truly wrap up the trip; to see if there is a possibility of a "left coast" hydrogen group, given the tremendous reception we received along the way. Stay tuned!

Thank you to all those who helped us along the way (listed on the banner; our sincere apologies to those that we may have missed).

- - Trip Banner - -

There are some really good, and relevant, conferences coming soon. Take a look at these:

Renewable Hydrogen Alliance
Annual Conference
June 16-18, 2026
Wenatchee, Washington

DCPUD Electrolyzer Facility and LD FCEVs on Water-to-Water Trip

The Renewable Hydrogen Alliance could not have picked a more interesting site for their 2026 conference, that is, the Douglas County PUD (DCPUD) Hydrogen Project and Fueling Facility. We visited the project last September on our Water-to-Water trip and found it fascinating.

For more info see:

https://renewablehydrogenalliance.regfox.com/2026-northwest-renewable-hydrogen-conference

California Hydrogen Business Council
Leadership Summit
June 8-9, 2026
Sacramento

A gathering of some of the most influential people in the hydrogen world.

For conference information, see:

https://www.cahydrogensummit.org/california-hydrogen-summit

2026 Toast to Clearing the Air
March 25, 2026
Sacramento

They've got some really great speakers lined up for this event.

For tickets or sponsorship information see:

2026 Toast to Clearing The Air – Coalition for Clean Air

Meet the New CHCOA Leadership

With a new year for CHCOA, we have made some changes to the leadership. Founders Greg and Bobbie Cane remain as President and Secretary, respectively, but we have added some new members to our Board of Directors and also have a newly formed Advisory Committee. We have included a bit about them so the CHCOA membership can get to know who they are:

Vice President Greg Todd: I've been working on pricing calculations and revenue collection (from the IT side), for Dolby Laboratories since 2010. I have two boys, who turn 21 and 24 this coming summer.

For FCEV's I'm a faithful advocate, and I'm here to support with promotion in any way I can. One of my immediate goals is to advocate/promote a fueling station along the 101 corridor south of San Jose (thinking Salinas, Paso Robles or San Luis Obispo). To me, geographically, this makes the most sense for a growth area, and would complement Harris Ranch and Santa Barbara nicely. This would be after, of course, we get Sacramento area back to what it once was.

Treasurer David Troup: David Troup is one of the earliest hydrogen car trailblazers; he has been driving a fuel cell electric car as his only vehicle since he leased a Toyota Mirai at the beginning of 2016. A decade of hydrogen bliss and angst later, he now owns a Hyundai Nexo. David has been co-administrator of the Hydrogen Car Owners group on Facebook for most of the past decade and has learned a lot about hydrogen technology and energy politics. When he's not managing his rental properties, David is an avid cyclist and a private pilot. David lives in San Francisco, where there are no hydrogen stations. He hopes to see the fueling network continue to grow to solve that problem!

Director Steve Mirkin: I was born in Plainfield, New Jersey and my family moved to California when I was three years old. We never looked back. I grew up in the 1960's so being a part of the car culture in the Los Angeles area was expected. I was always a Chrysler man. My first car was a 1970 Dodge Dart Swinger with a 340 ci engine and a four-speed transmission. I have always loved driving, remembering back to my first time at the Autopia at Disneyland and loving being behind the wheel. I have owned a number of cars and the latest one is a 2022 Mirai, it is the ultimate of technology.

I worked 43 years in the precious metals industry and was lucky to meet my wife, Elaine, who worked there as well. We even eloped and had our weekend honeymoon at the Monterey Vintage races in 1981. We have two daughters, two sons-in-law and a wonderful grandson who has followed in our footsteps and loves cars, airplanes, trains and Formula One. I am a lifelong Trekker and currently writing for the online Star Trek magazine "Engage!" (stfamily.org) and record a weekly podcast "The Big Sci-fi Podcast" with three others. I have always associated my life with the film, "It's A Wonderful Life" because we are so lucky to love and be loved by others. I have never been the "best" at anything, yet I am the number one platelet donor at Children's Hospital Los Angeles where I have been a part of that hospital for 37 years; my youngest daughter was treated there. I am at 400 donations, a hospital record that I am very proud of.

Director Nathan Okawa: Many of you have likely seen Nathan's posts on the hydrogen car Facebook pages. Since his start as a hydrogen car driver two years ago, he has rapidly become a "one-man support department" for FCEV drivers, both online and at an H_2 station near you. Before he retired, Nathan worked as a Laboratory Supervisor at the UCLA Medical Center.

Advisory Committee Member Wolf Austad: Wolf is a Cinematographer and straddles the globe with one foot in Oslo, Norway, and the other in Altadena, CA. He started his H_2 journey in 2017 and has remained a steadfast voice of support, and reliable poster of well-researched information on Facebook.

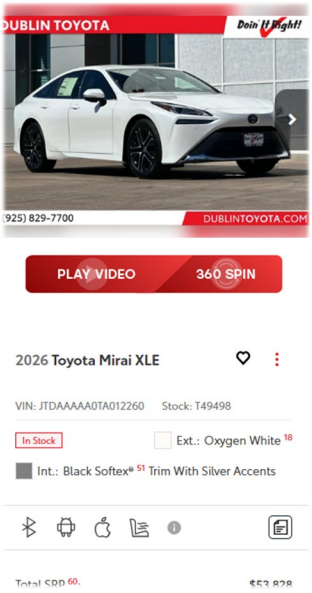
Advisory Committee Member Tadashi Ogitsu: Tadashi was one of the first to publish his FCEV travels with an article about his trip to the California National Parks in his Honda Clarity in 2017. Since then, he has owned another Clarity and two Mirais; his current one a 2025. Tadashi is a Physicist at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He lives in Dublin, CA.

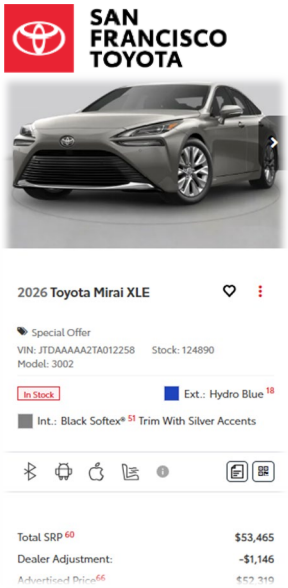
Advisory Committee Member Anastassios Petropoulos: Anastassios joined CHCOA in 2022 and owns a 2023 Mirai. He is an Aerospace Engineer working at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. His thoughts on transportation-hydrogen: "Hydrogen is the way of the future; it just needs political will to get there."

Hydrogen Snippets

New FCEV Car Sales are Not Dead

There is no truth to the rumor that you can't buy a new fuel cell car here in CA. In just a quick internet search for NorCal dealers we found many. These are just two:





Fuel Cell Partnership News

Lots going on at the H2FCP:

- **Station status updates after the Colton Fire**
- SOSS
- New web layout
- Resource database
- Great monthly newsletter:

Take a look: https://h2fcp.org/

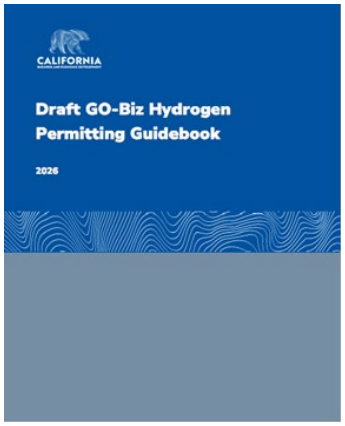
- Fuel Cell Mission to the Missions -

Although still in the planning stages, Bobbie and I will be making a trip this September in our Mirai to the 21 California Spanish missions, starting with San Diego in the south and ending with San Francisco Solano in the Bay Area.

We will be stopping at each mission for an hour or two and set up informational displays to help get the word out about these great cars. If you have time, we'd love for you to join us at a mission near you.

- Greg Cane

- GoBiz is Going Great Guns! -



H2 On the Move, the agency's transportation-hydrogen newsletter, is well worth the read. Sign up for it **here.**

Of immediate interest is the just-released *Updated Draft Hydrogen Permitting Guidebook. GoBiz is seeking* feedback by April 1.