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City's second CNG station 'an amazing investment'

By **KEVIN PARKS**

Tuesday July 22, 2014 11:08 AM

Columbus has the largest compressed natural gas station open to the public in the Midwest and quite possibly in the entire country.

Mayor Michael B. Coleman trotted those boasts out at last week's dedication ceremony for the new CNG facility at 2333 Morse Road.

"Everybody is really excited about our second CNG station," Finance Director Paul Rakosky said before introducing Coleman, Columbus City Councilwoman Priscilla R. Tyson and Emmanuel V. Remy, president of the Northland Community Council.

City officials currently are looking for a site on the West Side for a third and final facility to fuel the growing fleet of vehicles powered by compressed natural gas, as well as to sell the product to the private sector, Rakosky said.

CNG-powered garbage trucks and other vehicles save taxpayer dollars, protect the environment and employ "cutting-edge technology," Coleman said during his remarks.

The first station on Groves Road on the East Side, which opened in April 2012, has been a "phenomenal success," the mayor added.

"We are really making an impact in the country, something I'm very proud of," he said.

Compressed natural gas saves from \$1.50 to \$2 a gallon compared with diesel, according to the mayor.

"And we have a whole of vehicles," Coleman said.

The Groves Road facility has saved the city \$600,000 in fuel costs, and about 40 percent of the fuel pumped there has been to the private sector, the mayor continued.

"So we're open for business, with the private sector buying our compressed natural gas," Coleman said.

By 2020, the city should have 440 CNG vehicles, saving nearly \$2 million a year in fuel costs and reducing greenhouse gases by 10,000 tons, which the mayor said was the equivalent of getting 2,000 cars off the road.

Coleman went on to predict that Columbus could become a sort of compressed natural gas cartel.

"There'd be no need for taxes," he said, before hastily adding, "OK, I'm exaggerating."

Tyson said the new station represents an "extraordinary example of innovation and cost savings."

She described the \$6.4 million investment in transforming the site of a former White Castle restaurant into a compressed natural gas facility as just the latest in a series of investments in the Northland area and the Morse Road corridor. The figure includes \$700,000 in road improvements for the site, Tyson added.

The project began about a year ago.

"This is an amazing investment in our community, for the entire city of Columbus," Remy said. "We're just fortunate it's in our neighborhood."

"We're very, very proud that it sites here in the heart of Northland."

The CNG facilities place Columbus "on the forefront of clean-fuel technology," Remy said.