

Cobasys joins Lotus project

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Local company to supply battery systems for experimental vehicle

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ORION TWP. - Lotus Engineering has chosen Orion Township-based Cobasys to supply advanced battery systems for integration into an experimental Proton Lotus.

Scott Lindholm, vice president sales and systems engineering, said the company is using its knowledge of systems integration to help hybrid vehicle makers around the world offer consumers efficient, cost-competitive and dependable hybrid vehicles.

"We have built a reputation for offering reliability, high performance, safety and long life in a package ideally suited for a multitude of transportation applications," he added.

A nickel-metal hydride battery built by Cobasys is part of the hybrid General Motors Saturn Aura, which was praised by President Bush during a visit Tuesday to GM and Ford Motor Co. assembly plants in and around Kansas City, Mo.

Cobasys' system was selected by Lotus Engineering for use in a vehicle developed for the Malaysian automaker Proton Holdings. Cobasys was chosen for Proton's Lotus because of its leadership in hybrid battery system development and integration, Lindholm said.

Lotus' "efficient, viable, environmental" vehicle was displayed for the first time at the Geneva International Motor Show this month. The EVE vehicle had a Cobasys nickel-metal hydride energy storage system with integrated cooling. The system features "plug-and-play" capability for recharging the battery.

Mike Kimberly, CEO of United Kingdom-based Group Lotus, said the hybrid systems used in the Proton Gen 2 compact can reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 22 percent and is nearly ready for integration into current models.

Meanwhile, a Michigan Environmental Group, the Ann Arbor Ecology Center, urged more financial support for new technology such as hybrids.

"The U.S. auto industry has the technological know-how to produce advanced, fuel-efficient vehicles, but it desperately needs support from the federal government to accelerate investments in these technologies here in the U.S.," said Charles Griffith, director of the Ecology Center's auto project.

"Unfortunately, such support has been painfully lacking."

The United States provides only a fraction of the support that other advanced nations give to their auto industries. At the same time, it provides inconsistent policies to encourage fuel-efficient vehicle technologies, Griffith said.

Last week, Cobasys, a joint venture between Chevron Technology Ventures LLC and Energy Conversion Devices Inc., announced it was looking at financial options that could lead to a recapitalization of the company or an initial public offering of stock.