

CNG Fuel Station Going Up at Dearing Compressor



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BROOKFIELD, Ohio -- A compressed natural gas fueling station is under construction in Boardman near Dearing Compressor & Pump Inc.'s operations along Midlothian Boulevard, an energy executive said Thursday.

"We're building more infrastructure where it's convenient for the public, and where it makes sense," said Robert Beatty, president and founder of ["O" Ring CNG Fuel Systems LP](#) in Coolspring, Pa.

The company has partnered with Dearing Compressor to develop the new station, which Beatty says is being built on land next to Dearing's manufacturing plant.

Beatty made the announcement during a CNG "lunch and learn" event at Yankee Lake Ballroom, sponsored by the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce, and other industry partners.

Beatty said the CNG station should be completed and operational sometime this spring. "A lot of it is under construction right now."

Natural gas produced from the Utica shale formation in eastern Ohio, as well as the Marcellus shale in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, has helped fuel demand for CNG vehicles.

It's logical to build a station such as this in the Mahoning Valley because of the ubiquitous supply of natural gas, and because of its proximity to Dearing Compressor and Interstate 680, Beatty said.

Companies across the tri-state region are converting their truck fleets so they can operate on CNG rather than the more expensive diesel fuel, he said.

"The next industrial revolution is coming from the tri-state area," Beatty predicted. "All of the factors, the large gas supply, the large population, the large amount of vehicles and the key industry-related vendors all exist in the tri-state region."

As such, demand in the CNG market is on the rise. In Pennsylvania, for example, Beatty said he could take his CNG-fueled four-wheel drive pickup truck anywhere in the state and return home because there is an abundance of stations along major corridors such as Interstate 80.

"I have a 250-mile range on CNG," Beatty reported. "My wife drives a CNG-powered Honda that has 450-mile range."

Beatty's company, "O" Ring, recently broke ground for another CNG station in Marino, Ohio, along Interstate 71, Beatty said. The company also has a five-station project on Interstate 70 in Pennsylvania, and operates CNG stations in Brookville, Punxsutawney, and Coolspring, Pa.

More CNG stations are planned further east along I-80 next year, he said.

CNG fueling stations, Beatty noted, are often constructed around anchor fleets that are likely to patronize the business and Dearing is in the process of replacing many of its trucks to CNG.

"O" Ring targets smaller communities with convenient access to interstates and potential fleet business. "In every town, you have bakeries, water companies, utility companies whose trucks return every night. That's going to be the bread and butter for the fueling station business and savings," he said.

Beatty recalled that his first significant fleet customer consisted of 27 pickup trucks from a well tending company. "They were burning \$4,000 worth of gasoline every day," he said.

Once the fleet converted to CNG, the costs were cut in half. "That's \$60,000 a month in savings to a small business."

On average, it costs about \$2.3 million to build such a station, Beatty said. Initially, there will be two hoses at the Midlothian site but would have the ability to expand to four or six hoses as demand warrants.

"It will be able to serve Class 8 tractor trailers as well as individual passenger cars and everything else in between," he said. "Our target is the average working guy and the small-business owner."

Stations such as the one slated for Midlothian could be profitable with 35 to 40 pickup trucks fueling daily.

"It just makes sense to practice what you preach," he said.

"O" Ring's project coincides with another CNG station under development in Girard near the Interstate 80 interchange by ISG Energy of Dublin, Ohio.

Dave Mrowzinski, CNG program manager for IGS, said that project is in its engineering phase and could open by May, depending on the weather.

"It's going to be a pretty large station," he said. "It's definitely going to be suited for Class 8 long-haul day cab style tractor/trailer."

The new station will consist of two compressors and four hoses suitable for standard, light and medium-duty vehicles, as well as high-flow connectors for Class 8 tractor-trailers.

Mrowzinski said the company is looking to build more stations in northeastern Ohio, possibly in the Mahoning Valley. "There's a lot of oil and gas operations going on here and it's really what the industry is asking for," he said. "It's a natural fit."

State Rep. Sean O'Brien, D-Brookfield, helped organize the event and said the objective was to share information so this region can "get ahead of the curve" as the oil and gas industry develops.

"The idea was to partner our chambers together, our members together, so we could all be in the same room and let's get the experts in here to answer the questions," O'Brien said.

A bill that O'Brien and state Rep. Nick Barborak, D-Lisbon, introduced in the Ohio House of Representatives would allow tax incentives and grants to local governments for a five-year period in order to spur CNG development in the region.

Government, he noted, would be able to partner with the industry in the short-term, but ultimately the market will determine the course of CNG here, O'Brien said.

"It's really up to the industry itself to determine where it'll go in Ohio," he said.

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