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**PRIUS TAKES TEXAS BY STORM**

***--Houston Among 14 Texas Cities Using Hybrid Gas/Electric Vehicles in Fleets --***

HOUSTON (March 17, 2003) – In an effort to improve air quality and reduce fuel consumption, 14 cities throughout Texas, including Houston, are employing electric/gasoline Toyota Prius vehicles in their fleets. The hybrid vehicles in Houston are used in the Planning and Development department's fleet driven by building inspectors throughout the city.

Beginning in 2001, the city of Houston purchased five Toyota Prius vehicles. The hybrid vehicles were integrated into the Planning and Development department's fleet as a six-month pilot program. The Prius vehicles were monitored for their performance, including fuel consumption and maintenance. Because of the success of the program, the city has purchased a total of 64 Prius vehicles for its fleet.

"We are committed to making Houston an environmentally friendly city by improving the air quality for the community," said Mayor Lee P. Brown. "By incorporating these alternative fuel vehicles into our fleet, it is our hope that our actions encourage similar participation by Houston-area residents as well as the corporate community. We feel this program will help our city's environment as well as provide a cost savings for our taxpayers."

A total of 118 Toyota Priuses are currently on the road serving as fleet vehicles in Texas. Other cities that have purchased Prius vehicles include Austin, College Station, Coppel, Dallas, Denton, Fort Worth, Irving, Lubbock, Mesquite, Pasadena, Round Rock, San Antonio and Tyler.

Introduced in 1997, the Prius is the world's first mass-produced hybrid vehicle. It is the only hybrid vehicle that can run on electricity, gasoline or both. It never has to be plugged in because its extremely low-emissions gasoline engine recharges the onboard battery pack when necessary. The engine also shuts off when the auto comes to a stop, so it never wastes gas or causes pollution by idling in traffic. It restarts automatically when needed.

Thanks to its breakthrough technology, the 5-seat Prius is EPA rated at 52 mpg in city driving and 45 mpg on the highway. It is also the only hybrid classified as a Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (SULEV) by the EPA, which is 90 percent cleaner than an average vehicle. The only thing cleaner is an all-electric zero-emissions vehicle.

“We commend the City of Houston for deciding to combat air pollution with greener, more efficient vehicles,” said Toby Hynes, president and general manager of Gulf States Toyota. “The Prius combines the best in quality with the most advanced alternative fuel technology we have on the market. Toyota will continue to design cars that conserve resources and offer additional choices for consumers who want to drive more environmentally friendly vehicles.”

Worldwide, Toyota has sold more than 100,000 Prius hybrid sedans. The company also sells hybrid luxury sedans, 4-wheel-drive minivans and commuter buses in Japan. Nine out of 10 hybrid vehicles on the road today are Toyotas.

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