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SOUTHERN OREGON'S NEWS SOURCE

## Fueling station opens for propane vehicles

By **BUFFY POLLOCK**  
for the Mail Tribune

**CENTRAL POINT** — The first of its kind in the Rogue Valley, a Blue Star Gas propane vehicle fueling station opened Wednesday at 6096 Crater Lake Ave., just past Vilas Road.

The station is open 24 hours a day and offers a member cardlock self-fueling system.

Blue Star officials said the station is a step toward increased availability of alternative fuels in the region and at the outset will serve an existing customer base.

They hope business will grow as local companies and agencies take advantage of 30 percent to 50 percent reductions in gas costs by converting to propane.

Darren Engle, marketing director for Blue Star Gas in the region, said the station fills a needed gap for travelers along the Interstate 5 corridor.

"We'll have customers traveling up and down I-5, from Portland and Salem and Eugene markets, who will stop to refuel before they run out," Engle said.

"A lot of propane vehicles will have a dual tank so they can switch to gas when they run out of propane, but propane is 50 percent cheaper, so they'd rather refuel with propane."

Because propane fueling stations are few and far between, not as many vehicles are likely to already be converted.

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"One of the challenges with alternative fuels is the fueling system or the network of stations available," Engle said.

"Folks want the stations before they convert, but the stations don't usually go in if there's no customer base."

Engle said Blue Star is focused on helping interested companies convert their fleets.

The Central Point station, constructed with support of the Rogue Valley Clean Cities Coalition, is one of a handful of stations they hope to open in the state.

Sue Kupillas, Rogue Valley Clean Cities coordinator, executive director of Communities for Healthy Forests and a former Jackson County commissioner, said the station was a leap of faith for Blue Star Gas.

"It's very exciting for Blue Star to make this investment with this station because what we've been dealing with when it comes to alternative fuels and plug-in electric is kind of a chicken-and-egg situation," Kupillas said.

"There is a huge investment up front to set up an alternative fuel station. The demand hasn't grown to pencil that out and yet you can't establish a whole fleet of propane vehicles unless you have a reliable place to fuel up."

She added, "We're hoping this station is the first step toward more alternative fuel being available in our region. It's a step in the right direction."

On the web: [www.roguevalleycleancities.org/about.html](http://www.roguevalleycleancities.org/about.html).

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