MISSION FOR AMERICA · CHAPTER 05 · AT A GLANCE

The National Mission for Green Hydrogen

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For sectors of the economy that cannot be electrified, green hydrogen, produced by 100% clean electricity, is one potential alternative. Despite receiving billions in public subsidies and investments, hydrogen is still a controversial solution for greenhouse gas emissions reduction for several reasons: leaked hydrogen indirectly acts as a greenhouse gas (and is the leakiest gas on the periodic table), hydrogen requires large amounts of clean electricity to produce (though far less water than is often assumed), and it is difficult and expensive to safely store and transport. Despite these challenges, hydrogen stands as one of the most promising technologies for scalable replacements of fossil fuels for some applications.

It is important that hydrogen not be used in areas where it is clearly inferior to other technologies — such as large scale electricity production, heating, cooking, cars, and trucks.

This mission will build the infrastructure necessary to supply green hydrogen to every relevant application. The national mission for hydrogen will:

- Build a national green hydrogen industry with scalable capacity to replace all current dirty hydrogen production and to power applications where hydrogen turns out to be an appropriate fuel.
- Invest heavily in industries needed to build the hydrogen economy, such as electrolyzers.
- Require, assist, and finance producers of dirty hydrogen to convert to green hydrogen production facilities.
- Build green hydrogen production at the airports and ports the aviation and shipping missions will need, so the fuel supply is ready as those fleets scale. (See the national missions for aviation and shipping.)

Hydrogen has long been touted as a fuel of the future, but, until recently, was limited to only niche industrial uses. The falling price of clean electricity and other technologies will soon make unsubsidized green hydrogen competitive with dirty hydrogen. Recently initiated Biden administration subsidies make subsidized green hydrogen competitive now (against dirty hydrogen which is also subsidized via subsidies and support for fossil fuels).

With almost every application for hydrogen, a chicken-and-egg problem prevents the private sector from accomplishing a transition in the absence of public leadership and financing. Without an affordable and convenient supply of hydrogen, it doesn't make sense to invest in new hydrogen-powered planes, ships, industries, and infrastructure. Likewise, without large-scale demand for hydrogen, investing in hydrogen production and distributions is a non-starter.

The national mission for hydrogen calls for, among other projects, building green hydrogen production facilities at every airport and port to solve for the supply side of the chicken-and-egg problem. Other national missions, such as those for clean aviation and shipping, will solve the demand side of the problem. The specifics of hydrogen transport and clean hydrogen production make it most efficient to build production facilities very close to where hydrogen is needed. Unfortunately, conversion of long-distance gas lines to be used with hydrogen is not technically feasible.