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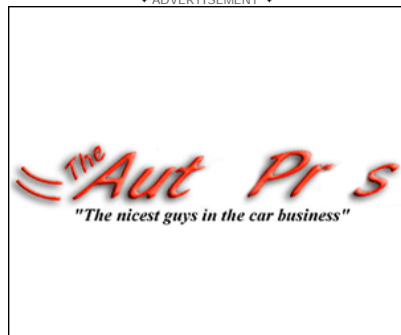
## Gas stations, plant in talks about E85

### For now, closest pumps in Wabash

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Although a \$60 million ethanol plant is about to open in Marion, drivers won't be able to buy the cleaner-burning gas it helps produce until local station owners decide to provide E85 at their stores.

E85 is a blend of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline. It burns cleaner and is usually cheaper than more traditional gasoline, but gets fewer miles to the gallon. If a car is designated "flexible fuel," it can run on E85 or regular gas, or any combination of the two.



According to the National Ethanol Vehicle Coalition's Web site ([www.e85fuel.com](http://www.e85fuel.com)), 1,244 gas stations in the country offer E85. Indiana has 87; the closest ones to Marion are in Warren and Wabash.

Mitch Miller, general manager of Central Indiana Ethanol, 2955 W. Delphi Pike, hopes that changes soon. If it does, it would make a full circle for CIE's production. Its corn largely comes from Grant County farmers, its production is within Grant County's borders and its fuel would be in Grant County cars.

"We're working with (gas) station owners in Grant County to supply E85 once we start or shortly after we start production," he said. "It's coming."

Rick McClure, executive vice president of Marion-based McClure Oil, said the company has been considering adding E85 pumps at its stores, which are located in central and northern Indiana.

"We don't have immediate plans for where we're going to put them and when, but it's definitely something we're going to look at," he said. "There are a lot of things to consider when you're doing it. You've got to have dispensers that have special fittings and because it's something new, obviously it's something expensive."

Michelle Kautz, deputy director of the National Ethanol Vehicle Coalition, said installing E85 pumps could be a significant investment for station owners.

"Many are (modifying an existing tank) since premium fuel isn't selling as rapidly," she said. "Many are changing out and putting E85 in, so they just have to change some parts and make sure the tank is compatible. To put in a new tank and dispenser, you're probably talking \$50,000 or \$60,000."

Kautz said proximity of ethanol plants to gas stations doesn't generally have much effect on E85 pumps springing up. Instead, it's state and federal tax incentives that make a difference.

Indiana has several tax breaks for E85 pumps, including tax credits to retailers selling E85 and grants for school districts, local governments and other fleet operators to install E85 pumps.

"If there are state incentives available, you'll tend to see additional E85 stations than (in) non-incentive states," she said.

Although it will come down to the cost of investment versus the demand for the product, McClure said the proximity of CIE and other ethanol plants to its operations could speed the process of bringing E85 to local stations.

"Plants are popping up everywhere, not just Marion," he said. "It's certainly nice to have a facility here in Marion, and (it's) one that might help us make that decision quicker."

Originally published July 15, 2007

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