

Natural Gas Vehicle (NGV) Best Practice Case Study

The Saunders Hotel Group of Boston — Driving Their Guests Towards a Safer Future.

The Comfort Inn & Suites Boston/Airport, honored with a Gold Hospitality Award from Choice Hotels International and selected as America's Environmental Hotel of the Year, is a model of excellence and innovation.



The Saunders Hotel Group has been at the forefront of environmental advances in the hospitality industry for over fifteen years. The Boston-based family business, which owns and operates The Lenox and Copley Square Hotels as well as the Comfort Inn & Suites Boston/Airport, has instituted more than 90 innovative, eco-friendly programs company wide. Their pioneering efforts have demonstrated for hotels worldwide how environmental measures can build customer loyalty and employee productivity while saving hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Saunders Hotel Group has received prestigious awards for their leadership including a Gold Medal from former President Bush and has been named **America's Environmental Hotel of The Year** three separate times. They have also been featured in *The New York Times*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and on *CNN* for their industry leading examples.

With these credentials, it is no surprise that The Saunders Hotels are always staying ahead of the curve, including switching their Comfort Inn & Suites Boston/Airport's shuttle vans to CNG (compressed natural gas).

Getting Started with Natural Gas Vans

"We knew that transportation decisions have some of the biggest impacts on the environment, including global climate change. Cleaner burning CNG vans provided a tremendous opportunity to reduce our 'environmental footprint'," said Tedd Saunders, Co-Owner and Executive Vice President of The Saunders Hotel Group, and President of EcoLogical Solutions Inc., which are collectively known for creating the hospitality industry's most impressive environmental management models.

"Before we purchased our first NGV in early 2003, we talked extensively with people from Ford Motor Company and Mike Manning of KeySpan Energy Delivery. This was a totally new product for us, and KeySpan took the time to walk us through the process and address all of our questions."

Purchase and Fuel Costs

Although the initial cost of a natural gas van was higher than that of a gasoline or diesel vehicle, rebates from Ford and KeySpan eliminated the price difference for Saunders Hotel Group and the Comfort Inn & Suites Boston/Airport Property. The prices of gasoline, diesel, and compressed natural gas have historically been similar. *“However, the price for CNG is much more stable than the prices of gasoline or diesel fuel,” said Mr. Saunders. “That’s an advantage which aids our budget planning. Another economical advantage is that because natural gas is a clean-burning fuel, there’s less fouling of the equipment and therefore less maintenance required.”*

Satisfied with Its First Natural Gas Van, Comfort Inn Orders a Second and Third

The Comfort Inn’s two NGVs are the regular shuttles for the hotel. *“These vans get very heavy use,”* said John Mitchell, Comfort Inn Boston General Manager and Saunders Hotel Group Regional Manager. *“They run every twenty minutes to and from the airport and have experienced a lot of wear and tear but they’ve been absolutely trouble-free. After our excellent experience with our first van, we ordered a second natural gas van, which began operating in February 2004. We’ve had no mechanical trouble with either van. They are both holding up very well.”* In fact, on the recommendation of John Mitchell, a competitor’s hotel recently ordered a natural gas van of their own.

Mr. Saunders notes that, although natural gas vans have a shorter range than gasoline or diesel vans, this has never been a problem for these vans, which refuel at Logan International Airport. KeySpan, and its partner AVSG, have a network of ten public CNG refueling stations in eastern Massachusetts. They are located at Logan International Airport, Lexington, Newton, Everett, West Roxbury, Stoneham, Tewksbury, Worcester, Middleborough, and South Yarmouth. **These CNG stations are open 24/7 to all fleets**, and they accept all major fleet and credit cards.

According to Mr. Saunders, *“I think the best way to express how we feel about using natural gas vans is that the proof is in the pudding — after trying one van under very heavy use, we were so delighted with its performance, that we bought a second and third van. Natural gas vans have not only been good for the hotels, but are also definitely good for air quality and the environment, and therefore, healthier for people everywhere.”*



The Comfort Inn & Suites Boston/Airport operates these natural gas vans as part of its industry leading environmental efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Facility:

The Saunders Hotel Group’s Comfort Inn & Suites Boston/Airport

Vehicles:

Three Ford 15-seat natural gas vans became operational in May 2003, February 2004, and November 2004

Initial Cost:

With rebates from Ford and KeySpan, equal to purchase price of a gasoline or diesel van

Fuel Cost:

Similar to gasoline or diesel fuel, but compressed natural gas price is much more stable

Use:

Shuttling passengers between Logan International Airport and the hotel every 20 minutes

Refueling:

At KeySpan’s refueling station at Logan International Airport

For more information on NGVs, contact Mike Manning, KeySpan’s Account Executive for Natural Gas Vehicles: Phone 781-466-5373; Fax 781-890-7934; or E-mail mmanning@keyspanenergy.com.



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