

# America's Clean Hydrogen Dreams Are Fading Again

The market for the clean-burning fuel remains nascent, costs are rising, and Congress just put a lucrative tax credit out of reach for many companies.

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A hydrogen-powered car fueling at a gas station in Fountain Valley, Calif. The infrastructure to support such vehicles also does not exist in most of the world. Philip Cheung for The New York Times



By Rebecca F. Elliott

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“Hydrogen’s problems are myriad . . . the hype around the fuel is fading fast . . .

“From Arizona to Oklahoma, companies are pulling the plug on clean hydrogen projects after Congress shortened the window for them to qualify for a Biden-era tax credit by five years. Projects now must be under construction by the end of 2027 to qualify, a hurdle that three-quarters of proposals most likely will not meet, [according to Wood Mackenzie](#), an energy consulting firm.

“Hydrogen is widely used to make fertilizer and to turn oil into gasoline, diesel and other fuels. It can also store energy, much like a battery, and be used to power cars or trucks, though it has long struggled to take off in those applications.

“The rationale behind it was that green hydrogen was going to be abundant and cheap,” said Matthieu Giard, head of the Americas for Air Liquide, a French industrial gas company. “It’s not really what we see today.”

Today, hydrogen is produced mostly from natural gas in a process that emits carbon dioxide, the leading cause of climate change. It can be made using electricity to split water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen. But many projects that aimed to do that have been canceled or are on the chopping block.”

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Michael Barnard

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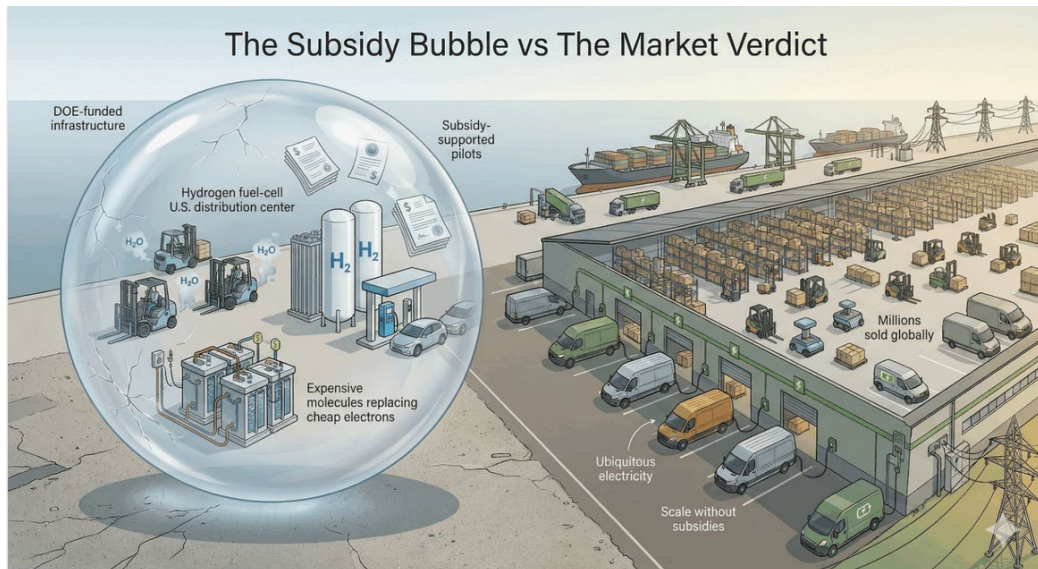
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Google Gemini generated a panoramic illustration depicting the fragile "subsidy bubble" surrounding hydrogen pilots, contrasted with the grounded, scalable reality of the battery-electric market

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“As time passes, the operational burden becomes clearer. Fuel costs remain high and volatile. Infrastructure downtime affects service reliability. Spare parts and trained technicians are scarce. Fleet expansion is delayed or quietly abandoned. Operators begin to limit deployment to showcase routes or special duties. Public communication shifts toward optimism about future improvements while day to day use declines.

“Eventually, the project reaches a decision point. Continued operation requires renewed subsidies, higher fares, or service compromises. At the same time, battery electric alternatives are improving and becoming more available. Faced with this comparison, operators and authorities reassess. Hydrogen assets are mothballed, sold, or converted. The original rationale is rarely revisited in detail.”