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Competitors set to start longest solar car challenge in the world

Twenty teams to drive from Austin to Calgary solely on sun-power

Austin, Texas, July 16, 2005 – Twenty teams have qualified to compete in the North American Solar Challenge (NASC) and drive along U.S. Route 75 and the Trans-Canada Highway (Highway 1) in cars powered only by sunshine.

The cars leave Austin's Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 N. Congress Ave., at 9 a.m. Sunday, July 17, and arrive in Calgary, Alberta, Wednesday, July 27, making history as the first solar car competitors to cross an international border. The car that completes the 2,500-mile trip with the least cumulative time will be the winner of the 2005 NASC, the longest solar car contest in the world.

Teams will be on display as they make final preparations for the competition on the museum's north lawn from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. today, July 16, and the public is encouraged to come look "under the hood" of these unique cars. Designs for the vehicles often are aerodynamic, sleek and colorful, with solar cells covering the car body.

The public also is encouraged to come cheer the solar car teams on Sunday morning at 9 a.m. for the exciting start of this historic international cross-country race into Canada. Starting ceremonies begin at 8:30 a.m. In addition, the public and media can follow the competition online at <http://www.americansolarchallenge.org>, where daily standings and other updates will be posted. High-resolution JPEG photos with photo captions are available at <https://www.eere-pmc.energy.gov/nasc05>.

The NASC route includes checkpoints in Weatherford, Texas; Broken Arrow, Okla.; Topeka, Kan.; Omaha, Neb.; Sioux Falls, S.D.; Fargo, N.D.; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Brandon, Manitoba; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Medicine Hat, Alberta, before reaching the finish in Calgary.

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The University of Minnesota had the best qualifying time in the May qualifying event in Kansas and will start first, with the other cars following at 1-minute intervals in the order of their qualifying times. Iowa State University will start second, and Auburn University will leave third.

A second qualifying events and safety checks were held this week at the Texas World Speedway in College Station, Texas. To qualify to compete in the NASC, each team drove its solar car at least 120 miles on the track at an average speed of at least 25 mph. In addition to the qualifying laps, all teams had to undergo rigorous safety and reliability checks at Travis County Expo Center in Austin, Texas. (Editors note: A list of qualifying teams, in start order, follows.)

NASC cars must be powered solely by sunshine. The teams use photovoltaic (solar) cells to convert sunlight into electricity to power their cars. Weather and energy management play important roles in the contest. The cars mostly travel at highway speeds and are required to obey local speed limits, but in general the sunnier the day, the faster and farther the cars can run. Bright days also allow the cars to “fill up” their batteries for cloudy or rainy days.

The contest is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Natural Resources Canada, DOE’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, TransAlta, University of Calgary, CSI Wireless, AMD and Manitoba Transportation and Government Services.

DOE’s overarching mission is enhancing national security. The priorities of the department’s energy programs are to increase domestic energy production, revolutionize our approach to energy conservation and efficiency, and promote the development of renewable and energy efficiency technologies. NREL is DOE’s primary national laboratory for renewable energy and energy efficiency research and development. NREL is operated for DOE by Midwest Research Institute and Battelle.

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) plays a pivotal role in helping shape the important contributions of the natural resources sector to the Canadian economy, society and environment.

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Start Order	Team	Car #
1	University of Minnesota	35
2	Iowa State University	9
3	Auburn University	7
4	Stanford University	16
5	University of Michigan	2
6	CalSol	254
7	University of Missouri – Rolla	42
8	University of Missouri - Columbia	43
9	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	6
10	Western Michigan University	786
11	University of Waterloo	24
12	Principia College	32
13	University of Calgary	65
14	Northwestern University	11
15	Red River College	95
16	Illinois State	88
17	Kansas State University	28
18	McMaster University	116
19	Queen's University	100
20	Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville	57