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EBO Group aims to be at forefront of plug-in hybrid technology

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Engineering entrepreneur Dave Heidenreich sees the day coming when the nation's largest energy delivery systems -- oil and electricity -- will intersect.

And he is positioning his company, EBO Group of Sharon Center in Medina County, to be at that crossroads when plug-in hybrid vehicles arrive.

Heidenreich is chairman of the board of the employee-owned engineering and manufacturing company with annual sales of \$20 million and a 20 percent annual growth rate.

EBO's PT Tech division is a global supplier of power train components for "extreme machines," including mining equipment, boring machines and overhead cranes in steel mills.

It also has a division that manufactures specialty surgical stretcher chairs and a third company developing hardware for the solar industry and wind-turbine technology.

This week, EBO Group's newest division, Triton Hybrid Drives, announced that it plans to develop and build an electric power pack that could be retrofitted to any medium-size bus -- boosting acceleration while saving fuel and cutting emissions.

The hybrid booster drive system will contain a lightweight but powerful electric motor, electronic controls and on-board ultra capacitors for power. Ultra capacitors are electric storage devices that can release large amounts of electricity for short periods and then be recharged -- in this case by applying the brakes on the bus.

A booster-equipped bus will be able to accelerate from a standstill to up to 30 mph before the diesel engine takes over, said Ralph Rogers, EBO's vice president.

Eventually, when battery technology catches up, lightweight lithium batteries can be added, converting the system into a "plug-in" hybrid, Heidenreich said.

"And that's when FirstEnergy will compete with Exxon," Rogers said.

To build the new system, Triton has organized a coalition of 10 other Ohio companies, an Oregon bus maker and the Electric Vehicle Institute at Bowling Green State University, which developed the technology. The group, Innovative Ohio Network, or ION, is seeking private investors and public funding.

Each company in the group brings a critical expertise, from motor development to electronics to casting, to gear making, to machining.

The first running prototype should be on the road by January 2009, Rogers said. The company hopes to begin marketing the system by 2010.

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