MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2009 THE GREENVILLE NEWS

Hydrogen conference expected to draw 1,000 to Palmetto State

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, S.C. — State leaders hope to cement Columbia as one of the world's hydrogen research hubs this week as a national hydrogen conference is expected to draw about 1,000 researchers, entrepreneurs and others to the city.

The National Hydrogen Association Expo & Conference begins Monday and will feature foreign automakers, energy companies and international firms from as far away as Turkey and India, The State newspaper of Columbia reported Sunday.

More than 100 presenters are expected with attendees from 30 countries, "and they are all looking to network in the largest hydrogen conference in the country," association spokesman Patrick Serfass said. The previous six conferences were held in California, Texas or Washington, D.C.

"It's the kind of visibility we couldn't buy," University of South Carolina President Harris Pastides said. "Having these many hundreds (of hydrogen professionals) here is going to open their eyes. I guarantee some of them didn't know where Columbia was."