Why aren't well-reasoned and objective analyses turned out by engineers more quickly adopted? Within reasonable bounds, good technical analysis can predict the relative contribution of a variety of alternative fuels to important considerations such as air quality, energy consumption, greenhouse gases and costs. So why do newspaper headlines, legislative actions and consumer preferences often seem to go their own way despite what engineers perceive as obvious errors? Who is missing the boat here? In this discussion, I first suggest what it means to "choose" a new alternative fuel. Then I move beyond technical analysis to identify some of the public policy issues that have a bearing on the choice of transportation fuels in the U.S., how these issues have influenced past choices and how they are likely to influence choices in the future. I then examine a public policy structure that appears to be delivering results on one important contemporary fuel issue and compare it to the structure within which other fuel-related issues are being debated.

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