Theoretical Models of H$_2$-SWNT Systems for Hydrogen Storage and Optimization of SWNT Production

Boris I. Yakobson, Robert Hauge
Rice University
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Overview

Timeline
• Start: 01 February 2005
• End: 31 January 2010
• 18% complete

Budget
• Total project funding
  – DOE: $857,998 (1.75M request)
  – Contractor: $216,476
• Funding in FY05 $75,000
• Funding for FY06 $175,000

Barriers
Barriers to be addressed
• Develop flexible representation for hydrogen-carbon non-chemical binding (van der Waals forces)
• Recommend optimal nanotube types for hydrogen retention
• Identify carbon-based geometries for the best physisorption
• Identify role of metal in hydrogen retention

Partners
• NREL, Air Products Corp, regular teleconferences, face-to-face meetings (Houston, Lucca, Boston, Houston, Washington, Gaithersburg, MRS San Francisco).
Objectives

- **Overall:** Develop predictive models of materials structures interaction with hydrogen, in order to optimize their makeup for storage and assess the gravimetric and volumetric capacity. Provide recommendations for the synthetic goals (e.g. diameter, type and organization of SWNT).

- **2005:** Theoretically investigate transition-metal enhanced adsorption via the various ways of doping carbon backbone $\text{Me@C}_n + \text{m*H}_2$, $\text{Me} = \text{Sc}, \text{Ti}, \ldots$ or $\text{Li}, \text{K}$.
- Investigate role of diameter and chirality on Me binding, and the highest gravimetric capacity.

- **2006:** Explore full utilization of physisorption by van der Waals dispersion forces. Develop and perform optimization of pure carbon carrier geometries for best surface, accessibility, and retention capacity -- binding energy.
- Use HiPco method to produce nanotubes of preferred diameter (and length) for better hydrogen adsorption.
- Perform quantum mechanical computation for precise description of van der Waals attraction. Compute potential wells for $\text{H}_2$-trapping on generic carbon structures, for achieving 7-8% storage.

- **2007:** Investigate effects of elastic and inelastic curvature of carbon cages on the strength of van der Waals attraction and develop proper force-field correction. Compute hydrogen capacities (gravimetric and volumetric) as function of pressure $P$ and temperature $T$.
- For the ideal carrier geometry, to assess at what $P,T$ the capacity of 7-9% can be reached, that is to establish theoretical limits for storage on pure carbon carriers.
- Explore mixed (chemical/physical) sorption mechanisms, and the role of hydrogen spillover storage.
Background and Challenge: Hydrogen for Energy Storage

Generic H₂-substrate attraction is either too weak or too strong.

To meet the DOE gravimetric goal of ~6-8%, the binding energies ~7 kcal/mole need to be achieved for the carbon-based carrier material. This can be attempted by the static or dynamic curvature, local electrical fields, and/or possible role of dopants.
Background of the HiPco nanotube production

- High Pressure CO at ~1000 °C is mixed with room temperature gas containing iron pentacarbonyl.

- Standard operating conditions are iron carbonyl at 52 mtorr in the reactor with an overall reactor pressure of 30 atm with a CO recirculating flow rate of 550 slm.

- Iron clusters form and catalyze the Boudouard reaction:
  \[ 2 \text{CO} \rightarrow \text{CO}_2 (g) + \text{C} (s) \]

- Nucleation and growth of SWNT occurs in milliseconds near the point of mixing.

- The SWNT is filtered out and the CO is recycled and CO\(_2\) removed to create a continuous process.


Approach

HiPco nanotube product will be optimized for use as constituent structure for high capacity hydrogen storage

Large fullerenes extracted from raw HiPco sample by fluorination

Raw tubes, with residual Me-catalyst

Cleaned tubes

Example TEM images
Approach


Superposition of the potentials can enhance adsorption at the optimum spacing.
**Approach**

Develop quantitative models for assessment of the binding enhancement by metal atoms on carbon nanostructures. Examples: Sc or Ti on carbon site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Binding energy of each hydrogen molecule, eV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1(^{st}) (dissociated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A: Sc-pentagon
w,\%(H\(_2\)) = 6.8%

B: Sc-hexagon
w,\%(H\(_2\)) = 6.1%

C: Ti-hexagon
w,\%(H\(_2\)) = 4.5%
HiPco @ Rice

A scalable continuous process for SWNT production.
World’s best quality SWNT supply for fiber spinning.
1+ month continuous runtime at 1 gram/hour production rate.

In November-December 2005, we achieved a new record of 42 days uptime with a Throughput of 1.2 gram/hour. We collected over 600 grams for our largest single calendar month production.

Fully automated reactor produces consistent product for nanoengineered H₂ storage media
Technical Accomplishments

Process studies

Catalyst nucleation aides
• Added various proprietary chemicals to enhance nucleation.

Process Conditions
• Temperature
• Concentration
• Flow rates

Mechanical Tweaking
• Experiments have been made to alter the mixing time and product flow path to prolong growth mechanism.

Special Design Mixers
Hot CO mixes in two parts with catalyst containing cold CO, creating an intermediate temperature and resident time for pre-clustering. This provides more control over catalyst size and hence the properties of the SWNT that are produced.

The flexible HiPco reactor design provides for continuing research on controlling the quality, length, diameter, and chirality of nanotubes that become the feedstock for the spun fiber and subsequent nanoengineered H₂ storage media.
Technical Accomplishments

Force-field parameters of van der Waals interaction with basic topological defects in graphene are derived from quantum MP2 calculations*

The van der Walls parameters show weak dependence on the topological defects and can be accounted for. Very large curvature can add curvature-dependent chemisorption component. This is first step to the rapid storage-potential computing.

*) MP2 is Møller-Plesset second-order perturbation theory
Technical Accomplishments

“Rapid prototyping” of potential wells: double-wall NT example

Potential wells for hydrogen trapping can now be efficiently computed for the variety of trial structures.
Technical Accomplishments

Example of carbon foam structure for hydrogen storage, designed from the buckyballs or larger fullerenes, by their annealing/welding process. Large size structure is optimized with semiempirical quantum-chemical method. It is stable, mechanically robust and highly porous.

$C_{60}$-based carbon foam
density $1.3 \text{ g/cm}^3$
H$_2$ uptake up to 65 g/L at $w = 5\%$ gravimetric capacity
Technical Accomplishments

3D carbon foam designed by high T annealing-welding of SWNT. Large size structure is optimized with Tersoff-Brenner potential.

- here ~1000 nm³
- 40,000 atoms
- 3000 heptagons
- ~15 % of all

- density ~ 0.9 g/cm³

- surface 2600 m²/g
- up to w = 7%, wt storage to 63 g/L

metal-enhanced sites
Technical Accomplishments

Evaluated stability of the Me-sites. E.g., binding energies of Sc with SWNT:

Diameter dependence of the interaction energy between Sc and SWNT(m,0), with m=4 to 10

Chirality dependence of the interaction energy between Sc and SWNT(m,n), with m=4 to 8 and n=8-m

Interaction of the Sc with graphene layer: \(\sim 0.20\) eV.

Established: metal-tube interaction is sensitive to the tube diameter and chirality. Higher binding energy is achieved on small zigzag tubes.
Technical Accomplishments

Investigated mobility of Me atoms on carbon nanostructures

Potential barrier of Sc diffusion along SWNT (4,0) and along graphene layer

Low potential barriers indicate possibility of metal aggregation, detrimental for storage
Technical Accomplishments

Absorption of H on Sc-clusters

Aggregation of Sc atoms on the SWNT surface is shown to reduce the hydrogen storage capacity.
Future work

1. Optimize the reactor to produce SWNT of the highest purity, best uniformity and the optimum diameter needed for hydrogen storage media. FY07.

2. Search for the best metal-on-carbon for hydrogen retention Calculation of the metal ability to bind H₂. FY06.


Specific questions to be addressed:
- Catalyst metal cluster and CNT interactions.
- H₂ dissociation on the catalyst atom/cluster surface.
- The diffusion of H from metal surface onto CNT.
- The absorption energy and diffusion barriers of H on CNT surface.
- The release of hydrogen – how the spillover can be reversed?
Future work

3. Further refinement of van der Waals force-field, with an eye on topological and elastic curvature effects.

4. Develop statistical-thermodynamics model for H$_2$ “pumping” into potential wells provided by carbon-based carrier material.

5. Assess hydrogen storage of the carbon-based foams, cross-linked arrays-bundles, and other structures. Predict optimal geometries.
Summary

1. HiPco production is brought to stable conditions in daily operation, presently above 1 g/hr rate, with over a month of uninterrupted work. Control of diameter of the produced SWNT is achieved, and must be further improved.

2. Computation establish significant hydrogen binding enhancement by metal-atom centers on carbon nanotube carrier, with up to 4-7% gravimetric. Low barriers for Me diffusion cannot prevent aggregation into clusters at elevated temperatures, with possible reduction of hydrogen storage. Broad range of Me-component must be further explored.

3. Designed and computationally verified stability of nanotube-derived carbon foams, 3-dimensional self-supporting material with high surface area ~2600 m²/g, and gravimetric capacity up to 7% with 63 g/L [example of (10,0)-SWNT foam]. Exact thermodynamic model for H₂ retention in the foams should be further developed for predicting the storage capacity w(P,T) at various conditions.
**Summary Table**

On-Board Hydrogen Storage System Targets

**Data is based on HiPco produced material only, not system value; parameters for optimized designed foam- and Me-enhanced structures can/will be computed upon completion of thermodynamic model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Storage Parameter</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>2010 System Target</th>
<th>FY05 materials**</th>
<th>FY06 Result materials**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Energy</td>
<td>kWh/kg (wt% H2)</td>
<td>2.0 (6 wt%)</td>
<td>0.43 1.3 wt%</td>
<td>0.97 2.9 wt%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volumetric Energy Capacity</td>
<td>kWh/L</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desorption Temperature?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;77 K</td>
<td>&gt;77 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plateau Pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Measured at 2 bar</td>
<td>Fit to 30 bar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Publications


