

May 25, 2011

# New M.P.G. Stickers Include Greenhouse Gas Data

By [JOHN M. BRODER](#)

WASHINGTON — The federal government unveiled new [fuel economy window stickers](#) on Wednesday for vehicles starting with the 2013 model year that for the first time include estimated annual fuel costs and the car or truck's overall environmental impact.

The new labels, which replace a five-year-old design that provided only basic information about estimated fuel economy, represent the broadest overhaul in the sticker program's 35-year history. There will be different labels for conventional vehicles, plug-in hybrids and all-[electric vehicles](#), with cars running solely on battery power estimated to get 99 miles per gallon.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation, which are jointly responsible for the window sticker program, rejected [a radically different design](#) that would have prominently displayed a letter grade from A to F comparing a given vehicle's fuel economy and air pollution against the entire fleet of new cars.

Automakers objected to that sticker as simplistic and potentially misleading. The government instead adopted a much busier label with more information and a sliding scale comparing vehicles across classes.

"These labels will provide consumers with up front information about a vehicle's fuel costs and savings so that they can make informed decisions when purchasing a new car," said Ray LaHood, the transportation secretary.

The new stickers will for the first time include a greenhouse gas rating, comparing a vehicle's emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases with those of all other vehicles, as well as a smog rating based on emissions of other air pollutants such as nitrogen oxide and particulates.

Cars capable of running on electricity will get the highest greenhouse gas and smog ratings, but the fine print indicates that the measure does not take into account emissions from power plants generating the electricity used to charge up the vehicle. Stickers for plug-in hybrids and electric cars will also include their charging time and estimated range running in electric-only mode.

Gloria Bergquist, vice president for public affairs at the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, said the government was right to leave power plant emissions out of its ratings for electric vehicles.

“Upstream emissions raise a complex mix of factors that auto manufacturers have no way of predicting or controlling, including the electric energy mix of a particular geographic region, and how much — or in what manner — vehicles are driven,” she said in a statement.

The labels will include an estimated annual fuel cost based on 15,000 miles traveled at a fuel price of \$3.70 per gallon as well as an estimate of how much more or less the vehicle will cost to operate over five years than an average new vehicle. In addition to the familiar city, highway and combined fuel economy estimates expressed in miles per gallon, the sticker will include an estimate of how much fuel the vehicle will need to travel 100 miles.

The E.P.A. said the new gallons-per-mile metric, combined with the estimated fuel costs, will provide consumers a more accurate measure of efficiency and expense than the traditional miles-per-gallon figure, which rarely reflects real-world driving conditions.

The gasoline price is based on Department of Energy surveys and calculations and is to be updated “periodically,” the E.P.A said.

The label will also include a [QR Code](#) that can be scanned by a smartphone that will provide more information about the vehicle and allow comparisons to other vehicles.

The National Automobile Dealers Association welcomed the new design and said it was relieved that the federal government had rejected the letter grade label.

“For decades, car and truck buyers have relied on miles per gallon — or m.p.g. — to compare the fuel economy of different vehicles,” the association said in a statement.

“NADA applauds the Obama administration’s decision to drop the ill-advised ‘letter grade’ in favor of one that prominently displays a vehicle’s m.p.g. By doing so, car shoppers can make informed comparisons on dealers’ lots, allowing them to take advantage of new technologies, which will ultimately put more fuel efficient vehicles on the road.”

Some environmental advocates pushed hard for the letter grade system, saying it provided car buyers the clearest way to compare vehicles across classes.

Luke Tonachel of the Natural Resources Defense Council said that the letter grade would have been preferable but said he was glad that the new label provides pollution impacts and operating costs.

Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign, who has been involved in fuel economy issues for three decades, was far harsher in his judgment of the administration’s decision and the auto industry’s lobbying campaign against the letter-grade system.

“The Obama administration has dashed consumers’ hopes for clear information to make educated choices about which cars are really clean,” he said. “With its \$80 billion bailout in hand, the auto industry has beaten the administration into abandoning the letter grade label.”

He said the label adopted by the agencies denied consumers clear information that would help them make informed choices. He added that he hoped the administration would move forward with strong new mileage and emissions standards for the 2017-to-2025 model years, with a mandate for a new car fleet average as high as 60 miles per gallon.

Those new rules are due this fall.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/business/energy-environment/26label.html>