

EPA Tailpipe Reg.'s "German Provision" Angers Environmentalists, David Cole

By [Robert Farago](#) on July 28, 2009



As well it might, given that the German automakers are about to game the Environmental Protection Agency's new "greenhouse gas" emissions standards. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that "Under a provision of a plan to curb greenhouse gas emissions, the Obama administration has proposed to set less stringent standards for car makers that sell fewer than 400,000 vehicles a year in the US. That target defines the major German brands as well as a few smaller Asian manufacturers such as Suzuki Motor Corp. and Mitsubishi Motors Corp." This has not pleased the America-first crowd or the friends of the earth . . .

David Cole, chairman of the Center for Automotive Research at the University of Michigan, said the provision would hand "a distinct competitive advantage" to German and other exempted companies that compete with the major U.S. and Japanese brands in the U.S.

Daniel Becker, director of the Washington-based Safe Climate Campaign, which advocates tougher regulation of automotive fuel economy and greenhouse-gas emissions, said BMW and Mercedes "should be required to meet the same standards as General Motors and Ford."

Strangely, the Germans don't see it that way.

Vehicles made by Mercedes and some other lower-volume manufacturers, a Daimler spokesman added, "typically are heavier due to more safety equipment and enhanced electronics that are absent from vehicles in the large-volume manufacturer segment."

A spokesman for Porsche AG said the German sports-car company "will comply with any future fuel and emission standards but cannot discuss the details on how this will affect us until we have seen the key provisions and exact language of the rules."

Same as it ever was, only more so. The '76 Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) regs excluded manufacturers importing/making fewer than 10k cars per year (the Small-Volume Manufacturers Certification Program or Porsche clause). Mercedes and BMW easily exceeded that target, paid tens of millions in federal fines and passed that cost on to consumers. It looks like they're mad as well and lobbying like a champ. But why?

As [TTAC reported](#) previously, the new CAFE/Green House Gas regs are *already* so full of loopholes they're virtually meaningless. Perhaps the German automakers should spend more time talking to the domestics' compliance team, and less time sullyng their environmental, uh, tree cred. On the other hand, if ain't broke . .

. [thanks to TMCA for the link]

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[Back to Top](#) | [End of Comments](#)



Mirko Reinhardt

July 28th, 2009 at 8:23 am

...or they could import more of their European lineup. I’m German, have a lead foot and use the Autobahn. My BMW has a lifetime average fuel economy of 40 mpg (US).



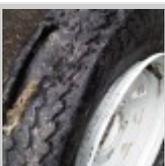
NulloModo

July 28th, 2009 at 8:29 am

Mirko – What model do you drive? I assume it is likely something diesel with mileage figures like that.

On one hand, the enthusiast in me likes that the performance german cars might get to come in without being neutered by smaller displacement engines and extra emissions controls, or that the cost may come down due to the parent companies not having to pay as many fines. On the other hand, it does seem unfair to volume manufacturers.

The current CAFE regulations are a mess. The logical, and easiest, solution is to simply require each automaker to have a certain percentage of its lineup meet certain fuel economy standards, but not penalize said automaker if the customers choose the more performance oriented vehicles in larger numbers than the efficient ones. Give customers the option of efficiency, but let the market speak.



don1967

July 28th, 2009 at 8:37 am

Maybe the solution is to break up bigger companies into smaller companies that slip under the radar. "General Malibu Option Package 124a Motors Inc." has a nice ring to it.

Let this be a lesson to anyone tempted by the seductive logic of Big Government.



Mirko Reinhardt

July 28th, 2009 at 8:41 am

@NulloModo :

Mirko – What model do you drive? I assume it is likely something diesel with mileage figures like that.

Sure, it's a 118d hatchback. 143hp, 221 lb-ft, 0-100kph in 8.9 seconds, tons of midrange torque. When I drive in a speed limited country, I get closer to 50 mpg. It's rated at 52.



Robstar

July 28th, 2009 at 8:50 am

Mirko>

Are those numbers with 4.54L = 1 gallon or 3.78L = 1 gallon?



tced2

July 28th, 2009 at 8:52 am

One of the questions is where did the 400,000 exemption come from? What engineering/science textbook indicates that is the proper value and delivers tangible environmental benefits? None. It came from the fertile bureaucratic mind of the EPA. Politics. Here's a clever idea – all production autos comply with the regulations. Then you can argue about what is production.



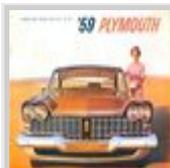
Mirko Reinhardt

July 28th, 2009 at 8:56 am

@Robstar :

Are those numbers with 4.54L = 1 gallon or 3.78L = 1 gallon?

I used the smaller, American gallons.



jpcavanaugh

July 28th, 2009 at 8:59 am

NulloModo:

The logical, and easiest, solution is to simply require each automaker to have a certain percentage of its lineup meet certain fuel economy standards

More logical yet would be to forget the whole stupid idea of CAFE. The more I think about it, the more convinced I become is that CAFE has been the single most harmful factor in the disaster that is the US auto industry.

As I understand CAFE, it is largely responsible for the complete de-fanging of the US luxury car. Cadillac or Lincoln could never build a 12 cylinder big ultra-lux car without tipping the corporate average into the bad zone. Then, because the fines would be levied against the entire output of GM or Ford, not just on the offending model, the result would be catastrophic.

This is a Carter-era nanny-state holdover that has somehow outlived the 55 mph speed limit and the seat belt ignition interlock. CAFE needs to just die. Instead, it is now being ratcheted up on a massive scale. Nothing good will come of this.



johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 9:03 am

Sure, it's a 118d hatchback.

And since it's diesel, there's really additional calculations to make. The diesel engine itself is somewhat more efficient, but diesel fuel is also more energy dense per volume (so per gallon) than gasoline, about 10% more so. (While gasoline is, IIRC, has more energy per mass, i.e., specific energy.)

So while diesel engines generally get about 20-40% better "miles per gallon" because the engine is more efficient, each gallon still emits about 10% more CO2. Thus the savings aren't quite as large as the headline MPG number. Diesel's still more efficient, but the EPA does the extra calculation when you're talking about CO2 regs. See the EPA calculations here. It's of course possible that the details of the new regs will treat diesel gallons the same, even though that's wrong from a CO2 point of view.

There's a secondary question of refining; diesel is easier to refine from petroleum, so that saves some energy, but OTOH competes with heating oil more. And then there's biodiesel.



sutski

July 28th, 2009 at 9:13 am

Sorry, but I am still an advocate of losing ALL imposed costs and taxes associated with motoring and make the only govt. charge a direct and transparent tax on the price of fuel.

It costs a big fat ZERO to administer, charges more to they who burn more (whilst commuting in the Aston), and at the other end of the scale, it allows granny to nip to the shops once a week without paying a fortune.

It also means that most folks will automatically start to look for more fuel efficient cars which will automatically tell car makers what they should be making...

I know a fuel tax it is always hawked as a green or another stealth tax, but if you REALLY got rid of all the other taxes, tolls, fees etc and JUST charged us on fuel, I bet it would solve many of the probs CAFE and other systems are trying in vain (and at great cost) to solve...



ihatetrees

July 28th, 2009 at 9:33 am

When it comes to cynicism, whoever said – “No matter how hard I try, I just can’t keep up” – MUST have had CAFE regs in mind.

Why don’t the domestics take advantage of this?

Can’t GM’s lawyers make Cadillac a ‘manufacturer’ so they can get the same deal?



johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 9:37 am

sutski–

I’d doubt that they’d get rid of ALL the other motor vehicle taxes, and for good reason for some of them. Motor fuel taxes would not eliminate congestion in congested areas without being far too high for other areas. Some mix of fuel taxes and tolls/congestion charges for areas with lots of traffic would still be needed.

However, in general, motor fuel taxes high enough to really make a difference would be so high that you would easily be able to lower other taxes or just give everyone a lump sum rebate. (Of course, the more you tried to tailor the rebate so that people got back approximately what they put in in extra gas taxes, the less efficient it would be at actually reducing gas consumption.)

The current Congress and Administration might well consider it, though they’ve seemed happier to simply fund more roads out of General Funds for the first time ever at the federal level. They’d also probably need

the revenue for other proposals rather than cutting other taxes.



johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 9:39 am

I thought that the EPA was going to the "footprint" based regulations? Or was that part of the Bush changes that Obama is abandoning?

Hypothetically, if you go to footprint-based regulations rather than a fleet average, you can avoid this issue, because then manufacturers don't have separate targets for large cars based on how many types of small cars they sell.



John Horner

July 28th, 2009 at 10:12 am

This doesn't bode well for the merger of VW and Porsche.



indi500fan

July 28th, 2009 at 10:22 am

I'm guessing Senators, Reps, and Fed bureau domos like to drive (or be chauffeured in) German iron.



Pete Moran

July 28th, 2009 at 10:25 am

CAFE was (is?) a valid attempt to shift manufacturer fuel economy mix on the supply side.

The problem, of course, were the pickup/SUV sized holes which GM/Chrysler/Ford happily stepped into for a 110% business commitment.

If any regulation was based on an index of MASS and POWER that would be all you have to worry about. None of the "footprint" rubbish would be needed.

Large MASS but low POWER = economy of sorts

Large MASS with high POWER = shocking economy

Small MASS with low POWER = outstanding economy

Small MASS with high POWER = way-hey!

Strangely enough the CO2 emission measurement is almost exactly the index you need.

USofA, just base CAFE on CO2 emissions and the job is done. You're moving that way.



Hippo

July 28th, 2009 at 10:32 am

The Wall Street pigs that own the politicians want to pay only so much for the BMW and Mercedes they favor.

The cars no one of them wants have to comply.

Easy. LOL.



CarPerson

July 28th, 2009 at 10:39 am

CAFE is and has been horribly destructive to the vehicle mix. It does not help anyone and the latest tweaks just make it worse.

Gas tax-only has problems as those in high mpg and electric vehicles are not paying a fair share what the transportation grid costs to maintain and expand.

Tolls are an incredibly stupid way to raise revenue to cover road costs.

Dump CAFE, increase the federal tax on gas, and add a graduated federal annual license tax based on vehicle metrics for the high mileage and non-petroleum-powered vehicles.

Those thus now paying a fair share for road use may point to those few cents a mile as a horribly unfair and unbearable penalty but they likely will fail to acknowledge their overall savings by owning a 50mpg vehicle instead of one that gets 25mpg. They likely also will not mention that when they are not paying an appropriate level of road use tax, others are being forced to pick up the difference.



spyspeed

July 28th, 2009 at 10:39 am

In the USA, political donations always secure what the ruling class wants. In this case, it wants unrestricted

availability of the world's most luxurious cars.

Regulations, just like taxes, are for the little people.



carguy

July 28th, 2009 at 10:50 am

tced2 – “One of the questions is where did the 400,000 exemption come from?”

That would be the lobbyists and their ever so generous contributions to our elected officials campaign coffers.



slateslate

July 28th, 2009 at 11:10 am

One of the questions is where did the 400,000 exemption come from?

ya, look at the lobbyists.....strong suspicion that Shelby (R/AL/Mercedes/transportation subcommittee) or Demint (R/SC/BMW/surface transportation subcommittee) had some hand in it.

not picking on republicans....listening to your neighborhood lobbyist is a bipartisan affair.



AKM

July 28th, 2009 at 11:20 am

1. I still think that in some cases, government intervention is necessary. Regulating pollution of all kinds is one, as it falls in the missions of “law and order” clearly devolved to the government
2. the only way to prevent short-sighted, constituency-and-lobbyists-sucking politicians to mess something up is to keep things simple
3. Americans need to get over their fantasy that taxes is an act of heresy punished by divine lighting bolts falling over the offender
4. What does that all mean? replace all that CAFE non-sense by a simple gas tax, and be done with it.



johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 11:20 am

CAFE was (is?) a valid attempt to shift manufacturer fuel economy mix on the supply side.

No, because it works on the entire fleet. It's not a valid attempt; like any supply side effort focusing on the entire fleet mix, it's riddled with loopholes. The problem is that the approach does nothing to affect consumer preferences, and it ends up saying that a manufacturer can sell a small number of more desirable vehicles if it balances it with less desirable vehicles. So everyone finds reasons why their preferred car should be exempt. (Do you need a larger car because you have a large family? Do you need a large truck for work? Should a performance compact like a Civic Si be viewed as better than a big car with worse mileage, or worse than a regular compact?)

The original CAFE decided that people who needed trucks, etc. for work should be exempt, but not large family cars or performance cars. So then everybody with a large family bought cars that were classified as trucks, to fit under that loophole. But if it didn't make that exemption, then lots of people would still need trucks for work and there would be a shortage of them. Unless you put a tax or something to reduce demand, but the original CAFE didn't do that.

The footprint regulations are designed to make excuses for both large family cars and trucks; this gives a loophole of a sort of large family cars, but at the same time stops the loophole that causes people to prefer vehicles technically classified as trucks to other family cars. If you think that the big problem is people moving from wagons to SUVs, then the footprint regulations address part of it.

If any regulation was based on an index of MASS and POWER that would be all you have to worry about. None of the "footprint" rubbish would be needed.

Huh? I don't follow what you're saying. Are you proposing that cars with more mass and power have easier targets to hit? That would be subject to similar problems as using footprints, only it would now create a new loophole for sport compacts in addition to the large family car and light truck loopholes.

Any regulation that focuses on forcing manufacturers to sell cars without changing consumer preferences (such as with gas guzzler or consumption taxes) will be riddled with loopholes. Taxes and prices are the only way to distinguish people who need a large car from those who just want, and without them people will find a way to pretend that they need them.



johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 11:24 am

Dump CAFE, increase the federal tax on gas, and add a graduated federal annual license tax based on vehicle metrics for the high mileage and non-petroleum-powered vehicles.

What, tax them the same amount regardless of how much they drive? That's an incredibly bad way of judging how much they cost the transportation grid. Unless you're suggesting the much-reviled odometer reading or Big Brother type solution of looking at mileage.

Tolls are a way to reduce congestion, not to primarily pay for all roads.



johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 11:28 am

ya, look at the lobbyists.....strong suspicion that Shelby (R/AL/Mercedes/transportation subcommittee) or Demint (R/SC/BMW/surface transportation subcommittee) had some hand in it.

Unlikely. Read the article. This is not a proposal that came out of Congress at all. This is entirely a proposal that the Administration made as a result of negotiations among car makers. See the comments by "Jody Freeman, counselor in the White House Office of Energy and Climate Change, who helped negotiate the agreement among car makers."

Congress had nothing to do with this regulation. This is entirely Executive Branch, the Administration, DoT, and EPA.

This to replace the Bush proposal which had somewhat lower targets, but had footprint-based regulations instead of fleet-wide averages so that the German car makers would still have had to meet some targets.



Jerome10

July 28th, 2009 at 11:30 am

DISGUSTING.

Get rid of CAFE. Its a disaster.

Can you imagine what must be going through the heads at GM, Toyota, Ford, or Infiniti?? German luxury cars (not to mention Jaguars too) would be allowed to continue to make huge, heavy, insanely powered vehicles while there would be NO WAY for GM to compete with a Cadillac making the same kinda number, Toyota with a Lexus, etc. Talk about tilting the competitive advantage. How insane is that??!! Basically gives the entire luxury car market to the Germans and neuters US and Japan.

More proof (as if we need any more) that the more government mettles in business/life, the more screwed up (and expensive) things become.

You know this same kinda crap is gonna happen with health care (certain companies will be the beneficiaries while others will be put out of business) and with cap and trade taxes (states with the ability to have hydro or wind power will receive all the benefits and money while states that don't have the ability to use hydro or wind will be the ones paying all the fines....meaning businesses will leave, people will leave, etc).

Awful awful stuff.



PeteMoran

July 28th, 2009 at 11:45 am

@ johnthacker

The problem is that the approach does nothing to affect consumer preferences

It would be more correct to describe the problem in "Chicken and Egg" terms.

American consumers proved very resilient to large car buying, despite the fact such cars were unjustifiable on a needs basis. It was also identified that the likely rising price of fueling such cars would create a national economic problem in years to come, so it was thought by encouraging manufacturers to change their product mix to provide more choices of efficient vehicles, the mix of vehicles in use would change.

Indeed it did. Camrys, Accords, Civic and Corollas proved extremely popular. That segments' fuel economy average did improve.

Had there not been the serious loopholes we are all aware of that created the pickup/SUV craziness, the national average fleet fuel economy would have improved massively by now.

Are you proposing that cars with more mass and power have easier targets to hit?

No, exactly the opposite. The more powerfully you push around a greater mass the more energy (fuel) you use.

CO2 emissions are a direct measure of energy use. Low CO2 = low energy use = good economy. High CO2 = high energy use = worse economy.

No need for anything like the "footprint" nonsense.

The Europeans have it worked out and the current Administration's people are on the way toward it.

"Footprints" may end up as an interim step.



GS650G

July 28th, 2009 at 11:53 am

Once again we expect our elected leaders to do the "Right" thing when they instead do what their masters tell them to do.

Exceptions to the rules are all over the place. Cap and trade will be no different.



CarPerson

July 28th, 2009 at 12:19 pm

A 60mpg vehicle driver is (effectively) paying half the road-use taxes a 30mpg vehicle driver is paying. Non-petroleum (electric, natural gas, and hydrogen-powered) vehicles are (effectively) paying ZERO road-use taxes.

That ain't right. Don't like a gas + license tax? What proposals can you suggest that balance the road-use taxes for all three vehicles so everyone is paying (approximately) their fair share?

The G+LT concept is simple: what road-use tax is not being paid at the pump is rolled over to a license tax (without padding it, please). As a starting point, what does a 30mpg vehicle driver pay in gas taxes per year for average mileage?

Use the 30mpg tax figure as the basis and balance high mpg and non-petroleum vehicles to that figure. For example, for a 60mpg vehicle, the half that is not being paid at the pump is paid via a license tax. For a zero-petroleum vehicle, because zero is being paid at the pump, the 30mpg/average mileage tax figure would be the license tax.

Of course those currently getting a free pass on the road-use taxes will scream bloody murder and demand the politicians not take away their entitlement.



CarPerson

July 28th, 2009 at 1:18 pm

Probably best to refer to it as a "road-use" tax that is payable on license renewal.

Since it is nothing more than an alternatively-calculated gas tax, all revenue should be required to go into the gas tax account, not into some politico's pet project.



johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 2:41 pm

What proposals can you suggest that balance the road-use taxes for all three vehicles so everyone is paying (approximately) their fair share?

Another possible proposal is tolls or congestion charges, but you don't like that. Certainly everything has a drawback, though.

The G+LT concept is simple: what road-use tax is not being paid at the pump is rolled over to a license tax (without padding it, please). As a starting point, what does a 30mpg vehicle driver pay in gas taxes per year for average mileage?

Simple, but still incredibly unfair to some people. Some people put 15-20k miles on their car in a year; some people put 7k on their car. Why tax them the same? Why tax everyone based on "average mileage?" "Road use" can vary extremely widely per person. You would impose a massive tax on people who don't drive all that much but have a car for the few occasions that they need one, and subsidize people who use the roads more than the average. It's a bad idea.

In any case, what do you mean by "what road-use tax is not being paid at the pump is rolled over to a license tax?" Do you mean on an individual basis, or on a society basis? If it's on an individual basis, then it's pointless for someone to get a more efficient car, as they'll pay more license tax to make up for it. If it's

on a society-wide basis, then it's not fair to other people who end up paying twice and they'll complain.



Johnthacker

July 28th, 2009 at 2:50 pm

Indeed it did. Camrys, Accords, Civic and Corollas proved extremely popular. That segments' fuel economy average did improve.

But progressively those models got bigger over time, also in response to customer demand. An Accord is a full size car now. People still like larger cars. What happened is that engine tech improved so that people could have larger cars, more power, and still slightly better fuel economy.

Sales have demonstrated that gas prices have a lot more to do with what cars people want to buy than CAFE.

Had there not been the serious loopholes we are all aware of that created the pickup/SUV craziness, the national average fleet fuel economy would have improved massively by now.

Not without economic pain equal to that of imposing a tax sufficient to make the difference, surely. But the thing about such regulation is that there's always loopholes.

No, exactly the opposite. The more powerfully you push around a greater mass the more energy (fuel) you use.

Ah, so a simple CO2 use based tax. Sure, perfectly good idea. A tax works better than regulation here.

The Europeans have it worked out and the current Administration's people are on the way toward it.

They have a funny way of being on the way toward it, publicly ruling it out and advancing an entirely different proposal.



AuricTech

July 28th, 2009 at 8:10 pm

Every time a discussion of how to reduce the amount of fuel consumed by vehicles comes up, I recall John B. Anderson's proposal to raise the gasoline tax by \$0.50/gallon, while cutting the Social Security payroll tax by 50%. I can't help but wonder how different things might be (for good or ill), had the US adopted this plan in 1981.

At any rate, Mr. Anderson's plan made (and makes) more sense than CAFE....



niky

July 29th, 2009 at 1:53 am

A 60mpg vehicle driver is (effectively) paying half the road-use taxes a 30mpg vehicle driver is paying. Non-petroleum (electric, natural gas, and hydrogen-powered) vehicles are (effectively) paying ZERO road-use taxes.

Putting an arbitrary tax on vehicles simply due to the color of their undersides is what started the whole mess with CAFE loopholes in the first place.

There is no "magic bullet" that makes two ton, road-killing trucks get 60 mpg. Near-20, possibly, but not 60.

A person who is achieving 60 mpg is doing it by driving an efficient, lighter vehicle that causes less wear to the road. They're also using low-rolling resistance tires that tear fewer chunks of asphalt up from the surface (because they're about as sticky as teflon frying pans). They're accelerating less and stopping less... stressing the roads less.

If they're spending more time on the road in traffic, adding to congestion, their economy goes down to a more realistic 40 mpg.

So... if that person with a 30 mpg car... say... a Honda Civic... hypermiles everywhere and gets over 40 mpg, we're supposed to add taxes on top of that gas tax to him for being such a practical jerk and cheating on his road tax?

I think not. Frugality should not be punished with a punitive tax. Simply remove the tax breaks for hybrids and other alternative fuel vehicles and voila! They're paying their fair share.

Tax their fuel, too, at a commensurate rate. Electrical utilities don't maintain themselves, and it's possible to tax natural gas used for vehicles.

-

Hydrogen powered vehicle owners? All five of them? Great! A huge, untapped source of revenue!

-

And if you're avoiding road tax entirely by using home-brewed waste vegetable diesel or a solar station to crack your own hydrogen... good for you. You're removing yourself from a system that relies on high maintenance oil-pipelines, cargo ships and heavy, road degrading trucks, gasoline stations and etcetera to deliver fuel. Whatever you don't contribute to road-maintenance is surely offset by your positive contribution to removing pollution by not participating in the buying of petroleum-derived fuels.



sutski

July 29th, 2009 at 7:03 am

Yup, so reading it again, it still seems to me that a gas-tax is the only TRULY fair way to directly charge users in proportion to the fuel/road use that they use, whilst reducing governmental admin costs and stopping ANY silly loopholes.

Admittedly EV's and other hybrids would get out of it lightly at the moment, but isn't that what we/the planet really want/needs at the moment ? i.e An urgent incentive to make less pollution and have less traffic on the roads, whilst being fair on consumers and automakers alike whilst providing natural a stimulus for a fledgling new job creating industry ??!

For me, the only way to get anyones attention about lessening US and world fuel dependence on the A-rabs (and helping to make LA breathable again), is by hurting the wallets of the big users of foreign fuel on a weekly or daily basis i.e every time they fill up with more dinojuice!

P.S

@John the Hcker

- Busy/congestion zones would automatically be less busy at \$10 a gallon so an expensive to administer congestion charge would be less of an issue anyway!!



CarPerson

July 29th, 2009 at 11:14 am

Your driveway is connected to about 5.7 MILLION miles of paved roads if you live in the United States. Maintaining and improving those roads costs money. Whining that you should only have to pay a pro-rated share based on the number of gallons of fuel you purchase doesn't feed the bulldog.

Very High Mileage Vehicles (VHMs) should only pay half? Non-petroleum-powered vehicles should use this asset for free?

A gas tax + road use tax keeps the increasing numbers of those slipping through our current pump-based payment model paying for those roads. That 5.7 million miles of paved roads you benefit directly and indirectly from needs to be paid for, regardless of how many miles you elect to put on your personal vehicle.

An alternative you care to offer?



CarPerson

July 29th, 2009 at 11:45 am

The telephone companies came up with a flat "Connection Fee" that is supposed to pay for executive bonuses the communications network to allow you to call anywhere in the Unites States (and nearly all the civilized world). However they also ding you for actual use.

Calling it unfair and a penalty to have to pay one's fair share for the basic costs to make the 5.7 million miles of paved roads available to you at the end of your driveway is not a convincing argument. Bringing those who are currently, to some identifiable degree, sidestepping the pump-based collection system we now use into an alternative collection system is only fair and stops penalizing the rest of us.

By the way, the American Trucking Association (ATA) publishes figures that the repair and re-surfacing of a

road is actually a rather small portion of what the total road costs are. The difference in road costs between 1,500 or 15,000 miles per year is nearly un-measurable. The basic costs just the put in the road and keep it operational is the big ticket item.



niky

July 30th, 2009 at 2:09 am

As I was pointing out:

Hybrids and high-mileage cars don't get spectacularly higher economy than cars of similar size and power. They pay less... but this can be offset by removing all tax incentives on hybrids. A Prius doesn't do anything much better than a subcompact car, and isn't quantitatively any better than a comparable turbodiesel (the likes of which are slowly trickling into your market). Again... what do you do about people who hypermile? A hypermiler in a Fit or Civic can match Prius numbers... so... are they cheating?

I think you're overestimating the impact of alternative energy vehicles on the road in another way, too...

There are an estimated 250 million vehicles on the road in the US. Of those 250 million, there are an estimated 700,000 alternative energy vehicles. A whopping 0.3% give or take a few hundredths.

And of those 700,000, half are E85... which can be taxed from the pump. One third are CNG and LPG, which can be taxed from the pump or have a tax put on them from whatever filling station people use... and just under 56,000 are electric. That's 0.02% of the total cars on the road.

Hydrogen can be taxed from the pump... but it's relatively pointless... there are just a few hundred on the road, all experimental cars leased to clients rather than privately owned.

–

The only fuel that can't be assigned a road tax replacing consumption tax directly is electricity. But if enough people go electric... add a submeter to their car charger, lock the charging ports on the cars to accept current only from approved ports, and tax that, too.

Yes, there will be cheaters. SVO has been targetted as a tax loophole in the UK for a long time... but this will be true of almost any system... and in this case, the system already in place is already rigged in favor of some people over others... so why not move to something more egalitarian and easy to apply? As compared to a complicated, expensive to implement usage based road tax based on flawed presumptions? Which it will be, thanks to the same lobbying that ruined CAFE... trucks get a break because it's for business... then tow-rated SUVs, will... too... minivans will get breaks just because they can seat seven... whether or not seven are seated or not... the list goes on and on...



Pete Moran

July 30th, 2009 at 2:40 am

@ niky

A Prius doesn't do anything much better than a subcompact car, and isn't quantitatively any better than a comparable turbodiesel

A hypermiler in a Fit or Civic can match Prius numbers...

No, and no. You should at least qualify such an apparently authoritative statement with "at constant speed" and "so long as you're not concerned about CO2 emissions".



Mirko Reinhardt

July 30th, 2009 at 2:51 am

@PeteMoran :

No, and no. You should at least qualify such an apparently authoritative statement with "at constant speed" and "so long as you're not concerned about CO2 emissions".

If you get the same fuel economy on the same fuel, you produce the same amount of CO2. Simple chemistry.



PeteMoran

July 30th, 2009 at 2:58 am

@ Mirko Reinhardt

If you get the same fuel economy on the same fuel, you produce the same amount of CO2.

Fair enough, but notice the "and" between "at constant speed" and "so long as you're not concerned about CO2 emissions"

Saying (not you) that a subcompact, turbo diesel, Fit or Civic will give the same economy as a Prius without qualification is deceptive at best, outright ignorance at worst.



niky

July 30th, 2009 at 5:11 am

What I said is: Isn't much better than a subcompact (what constitutes "much" is subjective, and we're assuming a good subcompact, preferably one with a Toyota or Honda engine)... but fair enough... what I meant about the lack of a quantitative difference between a Prius and a comparable turbodiesel is in constant running, on the highway... although, do note... that in one traffic-crawling Eco-run through London, the previous generation Prius was bested by a Hyundai Getz, and the current Prius has been beaten by a

Hyundai i30.

What I was trying to point out is: a hybrid driver, in the absence of tax breaks... pays up front for the difference in fuel economy... and is not getting such amazing mileage that he is completely exempt from a sales tax on fuel.

We drove one for a week. And while the economy was amazing, especially in heavy traffic, the difference between that car and a modern turbodiesel of the same passenger capacity was something like a mere 1 to 2 liters every 100 kilometers. And that was a turbodiesel with much better performance and power than the hybrid (a Focus). If we'd chosen a turbodiesel with the same performance, say, the new i30, the difference would be nil or would swing in the direction of the turbodiesel.

Against a gasoline subcompact... the difference is still around just 2-3 liters per 100 kilometers.... which comes out to a difference in fuel cost of just \$40-50 (based on three dollar gas... these are all just estimations based on our real-world test data) per 1000 miles... or up to \$80 per 1000 miles in the harshest traffic conditions, where hybrids do best.

Haven't done the 1.8 liter Prius, but we expect it to do worse than the old 1.5 in traffic and marginally better on the highway.

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