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Biden announces new emissions standards, target that 50% of vehicles sold in US by 2030 are electric

By Ella Nilsen, CNN
August 5, 2021

[President Joe Biden](#) unveiled another component of his administration's plan to fight the climate crisis on Thursday, announcing a new target that half of vehicles sold in the country by 2030 will be battery electric, fuel-cell electric or plug-in hybrid.

Biden signed the executive order at the White House alongside representatives from Ford, GM and Stellantis, and members of the United Auto Workers Union. The automakers are supporting Biden's new target, announcing their "shared aspiration" that 40-50% of their cars sold by 2030 to be electric vehicles, according to a joint statement from the three automakers.

Speaking from the White House South Lawn on Thursday afternoon in front of four electric vehicles, Biden said the future of America's car manufacturing "is electric and there's no turning back."

"The question is whether we'll lead or fall behind in the race for the future," the president added. Throughout Biden's remarks, he emphasized that a move toward electric vehicles should come with an assurance that those vehicles and the batteries powering them should be made in the US and with union workers.

The Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Transportation also announced Thursday they are reversing a Trump-era rollback of fuel emissions standards. The newly proposed standards from the agencies for light-duty vehicles will be 10% more stringent than the Trump-era rules for 2023 model year vehicles, then becoming 5% more stringent each year through 2026 model year vehicles.

The proposed emissions standard for mileage year 2026 is 52 miles per gallon, up from 43.3 miles per gallon under the Trump administration, which is the current mileage standard. The new standard is also up from 50.8 miles per gallon under the Obama administration rules for mileage year 2026.

The Biden administration's proposed standard would translate to a label value -- what the consumer would see on a new car sticker -- of 38.2 mpg. The EPA estimates that implementing these standards would avoid 2.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions through 2050.

The agencies also announced a separate set of regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for heavy-duty trucks. The first rulemaking process for trucks is expected to be finalized next year, and will apply to heavy duty vehicles starting with the 2027 mileage year, according to the EPA.

Speaking on Wednesday night, a senior administration official echoed Biden's comments.

"This is a paradigm shift," a senior administration official told reporters on Wednesday. "What we're hearing across the board is a consensus about the direction where this industry is going, and a coming together around the recognition that this is the moment of truth, not just for climate action for economic action as well."

"This is an important sector of the economy," the senior administration official told CNN on Wednesday. "Transportation emissions represents the largest share of emissions in the economy. It's a central element of the President's climate agenda to tackle the emissions in the space, and it's a central element of his economic agenda to help us grow our leadership in electric vehicles, grow the good paying union jobs that come with it."

Still, some environmental advocates and lawmakers fear car companies could skirt the standards with loopholes -- including allowances for EV makers like Tesla to sell credits to companies that sell gas-guzzling cars, thereby allowing them to meet the standards without electrifying their fleets.

"We must guard against the inclusion of legacy loopholes, which may allow for even lower greenhouse gas emissions standards than before," Democratic Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts said in a statement. "We know the highest standards possible are economically feasible and technologically achievable because the automotive industry is already installing them."

Asked by CNN how the new standards would impact those regulatory credits, the official said, "The rules provide a trajectory on credits that the agencies will be taking comment on."

Advocates also called on Biden to implement stronger emissions standards, rather than calling on automakers to hit targets.

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The youth climate advocacy group Sunrise Movement sharply criticized Biden's electric vehicles target, saying it's not sufficient enough to combat the climate crisis.

"Biden cannot think of himself as the climate president with a 50% electric vehicles goal," Sunrise executive director Varshini Prakash said in a statement. "FDR didn't set a goal to half win the war, and JFK didn't set a goal to get halfway to the moon. If we are still selling gas cars in 2030, they'll be on the road for another 10, 15, 20 years -- long after his presidency and well into our already unstable futures."

UAW President Ray Curry urged Congress to pass more funding for electric vehicles, as well as stronger labor protections like the PRO Act, which would strengthen the ability of unions to form and bargain.

"The members of the UAW, current and future, are ready to build these electric cars and trucks and the batteries that go in them," Curry said in a statement. "Our members are America's secret weapon in winning this global race."

Like UAW, US automakers called on Biden and Congress to make additional investments in building out electric vehicle infrastructure and incentives in its upcoming reconciliation bill -- calling for a comprehensive network of EV charging stations, and purchasing incentives for consumers.

"This represents a dramatic shift from the U.S. market today that can be achieved only with the timely deployment of the full suite of electrification policies committed to by the Administration in the Build Back Better Plan," Ford, GM, and Stellantis said in the joint statement.

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