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Biden Administration Wants New Vehicles To Average 49 MPG By 2026

By [Alan Ohnsman](#)

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The Biden Administration, which is pushing automakers to get more electric vehicles on the road, is setting higher fuel-economy rules that require the average new car or truck to get nearly 50 miles per gallon of gasoline by 2026 as part of efforts to cut carbon pollution and save consumers money.

The new Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE, standards announced today by [Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg](#) require an 8% industrywide increase in average fuel efficiency in both 2024 and 2025 model-year vehicles and a 10% boost in 2026. The overall increase is at least 10 mpg by 2026 and is up from an average of about 36 mpg in the 2021 model year.

The higher standard could reduce U.S. gasoline consumption by 234 billion gallons by 2050 and “means American families will be able to drive farther before they have to fill up, saving hundreds of dollars per year,” Buttigieg said in a briefing in Washington on Friday. “These improvements will also make our country less vulnerable to global shifts in the price of oil and protect communities by reducing carbon emissions by 2.5 billion metric tons.”

The announcement comes amid spiking gasoline prices following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and is a reversal of Trump-era policies in which the former administration eased tough CAFE rules set by the Obama Administration. The standard proposed today is the average of all models an automaker sells and has grown easier to attain as companies ramp up production of battery-

electric cars and trucks that boost their fleetwide efficiency. That's why, unlike in past years, the industry isn't ramping up efforts to block tougher standards.

The nationwide average cost of a gallon of gasoline is \$4.215, up from \$2.876 a year ago, according to [AAA's daily fuel guide](#). This week President Joe Biden announced plans to begin releasing 1 million barrels of oil per day for the next six months from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help curb fuel prices in the short term.

"Transportation is the second-largest cost for American families, only behind housing, and middle-income and low-income households spend almost 20% of their paycheck on transportation," Buttigieg said. "This issue has been building for years. It is also made worse, anytime there is a development or a shock anywhere in the world that disrupts gas prices like what we're seeing right now."

Environmental groups such as the Natural Resource Defense Council support the new targets but want even more stringent ones. "Technological advancements, energy savings and consumer benefits justify even stronger standards," said Luke Tonachel, NRDC's director for clean vehicles and fuels. "The only way to escape the volatility of the global energy markets is to cut our reliance on oil."

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Likewise, the Sierra Club welcomed today's news as a "first step."

"We need policies like this regulation, and much more, to get the automotive industry to be manufacturing 100% zero-emission cars," Sierra Club President Ramón Cruz said in a statement. "We urge the NHTSA to get moving on the strongest possible long-term standards that rapidly increase fuel economy along the way to zero-emission vehicles to protect our communities by addressing the nation's top source of pollution."

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