



Trump administration lowers fuel economy standards, critics say at a significant environmental cost

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“Trump is tanking sensible mile per gallon standards at the worst possible time for consumers, who are getting hit with sky-high prices at the pump,” the Center for Biological Diversity’s Becker said. “Consumers will pay the price for these reckless rollbacks while Trump’s Big Oil and Big Auto buddies reap the short-term profits.”

By Alexa St. John and Anne D’Innocenzio
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DETROIT (AP) — The Trump administration on Monday released new fuel economy standards that relax regulatory requirements for automakers to control pollution from gasoline-powered cars and light trucks. The new rules were released shortly after President Donald Trump rejected an Iranian proposal to open the Strait of Hormuz, sending oil prices soaring.

The change furthers Trump’s promise to revoke policies that encouraged or created incentives for the production of electric vehicles and ultimately, will expose Americans to more planet-warming pollution from vehicles.

Mileage standards, known as Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE, requirements, have been implemented since the 1970s energy crisis, and set out how far new vehicles need to travel on a gallon of gasoline. Over time, automakers have gradually improved their vehicles’ average efficiency.

The Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that the finalized standards would correspond to a combined industry fleetwide average of roughly 34.9 miles per gallon for passenger cars and light trucks in the 2031 model year. That’s up from 30.1 miles per gallon for model year 2024, but down from a projected 50.4 miles per gallon in 2031 under rules put in place by the Biden administration.

“Thanks to President Trump’s leadership, we have finally ended the illegal mandate that forced automakers to produce more expensive electric vehicles that American families didn’t want,” Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy said in a statement touting vehicle affordability.

NHTSA had [projected last December that the new standards](#) would hover at roughly 34.5 miles per gallon.

The news comes amid ongoing tensions as the war in Iran persists, with Trump [refusing a deal with Iran](#) to open the Strait as recently as Saturday, impacting the world’s oil supply.

Environmental groups concerned over the rollback

News of the revised standards immediately drew rebukes from environmentalists.

The DOT said Monday that the rule would cut yearly oil consumption in 2050 by about 1.3 billion barrels as compared to yearly oil consumption in 2024.

But when the 2024 standards went into effect, NHTSA estimated they would save 14 billion gallons of gasoline from being burned by 2050. The agency also said that while new fuel-efficient vehicles cost more up front, savings on gasoline over the lifetime of the car or truck would more than make up for that.

Environmental groups estimate now, without stricter standards, cars could produce 22,111 more tons of carbon dioxide per year than under the Biden-era rules in 2035.

The rule also translates to an extra 90 tons a year of deadly soot particles and 4,870 additional tons a year of smog components such as nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds emitted into the air in coming years, experts say.

Transportation already accounts for much of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions that warm the planet; 28% as of the last estimate in 2022.

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Since taking office, Trump has also pulled back auto tailpipe emissions rules, [repealed fines for automakers that do not meet federal mileage standards](#) and [terminated consumer credits of up to \\$7,500 for EV purchases](#).

The president has repeatedly pledged to end what he falsely calls an EV “mandate,” referring incorrectly to former President Joe Biden’s target that half of all new vehicle sales be electric by 2030. No federal policy has mandated auto companies to sell EVs.

According to data from Cox Automotive, EVs accounted for 5.7% of total new-vehicle sales in August, down from 7.4% for all of 2025.

Katherine García, director of the Sierra Club's Clean Transportation for All campaign, vowed the environmental group would fight the rule.

"Less fuel-efficient cars mean more gas burned, spending more at the pump, and dirtier air in our communities," Garcia wrote in a statement.

The state of the industry

Automakers and industry groups have said the new rules will increase Americans' access to the full range of gasoline vehicles they need and can afford.

"NHTSA made the right call to better align fuel economy standards with the law and current market conditions," John Bozzella, president and CEO of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which represents the domestic auto industry, said in a statement. He said the previous standards "effectively required a switchover to electric vehicles that was out of step with market realities and customer demand. Today's final rule is an appropriate course correction."

"What the industry needs is long-term regulatory stability that includes balanced, durable and achievable fuel economy standards that continue to reduce emissions and improve fuel economy," Bozzella added. "This is the formula for preserving consumer vehicle choice and keeping the U.S. auto industry globally competitive."

A spokesperson for Ford Motor Company, maker of the top-selling pickup truck, the F-150, said: "We appreciate Secretary Duffy and the Administration's work to align regulations with market realities. As we evaluate the final rule's full impact on our business, we'll continue working with the Administration to build a strong American auto industry."

A General Motors spokesperson said in a statement the company supports the goals of the rule "and its intention to better align fuel economy standards with market realities."

Stellantis also welcomed the changes.

"These standards will allow us to offer our customers the freedom to choose from a range of vehicles and powertrains that meet their needs, from brands they love and trust," a Stellantis spokesperson said in a statement.

Trump wrote on his Truth Social media account Saturday that the less stringent mileage requirements would "take the waste out of building cars in America" and save families "thousands on a new, beautiful and safe car," while boosting auto production in the U.S.

The DOT reiterated on Monday that the changes will cut the average cost of a new vehicle by \$1,300, and save Americans \$138 billion over the next five years.

Americans, however, are spending more on gas as Washington's war [with Iran](#) disrupts the global [flow of fuel](#); gasoline prices averaged \$4.47 on Monday, according to the AAA motor club, up from \$3.13 a year ago. The rising cost of oil [weighed on U.S. stocks to start the week](#).

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Experts have also said that less stringent rules do not necessarily translate to more consumer purchases of new vehicles that may have more safety features.

The average new car in America sold for \$50,089 in August, crossing over the \$50,000 line for the first time since last December, according to [Kelley Blue Book data](#).

<https://abcnews.com/US/wireStory/trump-administration-set-roll-lower-fuel-economy-standards-136813319>