Ford Hybrid Fuel Economy Falling Short

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DETROIT (AP) — Ford said Friday that it's talking to the government about the fuel economy of its hybrid cars after a report suggested they're falling short of targets.

Consumer Reports said last week that Ford's new C-Max hybrid didn't meet the published fuel economy of 47 miles per gallon, averaging 38 miles per gallon in the magazine's testing. Other hybrids — including the Ford Fusion and Toyota Prius V — have also fallen short in the magazine's tests.

Ford said it followed the Environmental Protection Agency's guidelines when it set its fuel economy standards. But the EPA's hybrid tests don't exactly mimic real-world driving. For example, Consumer Reports said it measures highway fuel use for a car going 65 miles per hour, but the EPA's highway test speed averages 48 mph.

Ford's global vehicle development chief Raj Nair said the way owners drive their hybrids can also affect performance. For example, driving a hybrid car 75 miles per hour, instead of 65 miles per hour, can cost the driver seven miles per gallon, Nair said. Hot or cold temperatures can also affect the numbers.

Nair said Ford is talking to the EPA to see if the agency needs to change the way it tests hybrids. The EPA said Friday that it is reviewing Consumer Reports' results.

Fuel economy dominated the conversation Friday as Ford introduced two new commercial vehicles that will go on sale late next year.

The Transit, which will eventually replace Ford's E-Series vans, will haul 300 pounds more than the current E-Series and has twice the volume. Ford will offer three engine choices and three roof heights.

The company also unveiled a smaller Transit Connect commercial vehicle, which is getting its first big makeover since it went on sale in Europe a decade ago.

The new Transit Connect can tow up to 2,000 pounds for the first time. It comes in short and long versions. Ford will also offer an optional EcoBoost engine in the Transit Connect that is expected to get more than 30 miles per gallon.

Ford didn't release prices or final fuel economy numbers for the vans.

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