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## **EPA CONSIDERING CHANGES TO FUEL ECONOMY RATINGS**

### ***Petition by Environmental Group Spurs Agency Action***

**San Francisco, CA** – In response to a rulemaking petition submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency by the national environmental group Bluewater Network, EPA is considering altering its fuel economy labels to better represent the real-world fuel economy that motorists are getting on the road. According to Bluewater, actual fuel economy can be as much as 20 percent lower than what EPA's labels suggest.

"It's unlawful for corporations to mislead the public about their products. But thanks to the EPA, car owners are paying two to three hundred dollars more every year for gas than they thought they would," said Russell Long, Executive Director of Bluewater Network. EPA fuel economy labels indicate projected annual fuel costs based upon EPA mileage figures. "We're glad that the agency is finally addressing this problem. Accurate labels will steer motorists towards cleaner cars, save money, and reduce global warming pollution and dependence on foreign oil," said Long.

Bluewater Network's petition, filed in June 2002, urged EPA to revise the outdated 1985 test procedures and calculation methods it uses to arrive at its fuel economy label values so that they more accurately reflect today's driving conditions, and to report this more accurate information to consumers and policy makers. The EPA is soliciting public comment on the accuracy of its fuel economy label values and changes in current driving patterns to help the Agency determine whether it should grant the petition and amend its regulations governing fuel economy labeling.

At the same time that it petitioned the EPA, Bluewater also released a report demonstrating that the EPA and DOT are misleading consumers and the US Congress by overestimating the average fuel economy of passenger vehicles. The report, entitled ***Fuel Economy Falsehoods: How government misrepresentation of fuel economy hinders efforts to reduce global warming and US dependence on foreign oil,*** ([http://www.bluewaternetnetwork.org/reports/rep\\_ca\\_global\\_fuelfalsehood2.pdf](http://www.bluewaternetnetwork.org/reports/rep_ca_global_fuelfalsehood2.pdf)) calls attention to major discrepancies between how federal agencies portray fuel economy and the actual fuel economy which motorists achieve in real-world driving.

In addition, a variety of figures provided by the federal government create confusion among policymakers, the media, and the public. For example, in 2002 EPA proclaimed that the average fuel economy of model year 2001 vehicles was 23.9 miles per gallon (mpg), and DOT informed Congress that this figure stood at 24.8 mpg. EPA has also recently begun publishing another value – an adjusted average that uses obsolete correction factors. Bluewater's report demonstrates that vehicles may actually be achieving less than 20 mpg on the road.

The report highlights that the test procedures and calculation methods EPA uses to determine fuel economy are based on surveys of traffic patterns conducted more than two decades ago. Significant increases in urban congestion, average highway driving speeds, and the percentage of driving taking place in urban areas have rendered the testing and calculation methods outdated.





"With global warming heating up, and US gasoline prices at all-time highs, the declining fuel economy of America's passenger vehicles is a critical issue," said Long. "The President, the Congress, and the public should be provided accurate and reliable information, not propaganda."

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