

Ford challenges developers to create efficiency app

March 29 2013, by Alisa Priddle

Ford wants to help customers more accurately measure the fuel economy of their Ford vehicles to counter claims it has overstated the fuel economy of certain models.

Speaking Wednesday at the New York Auto Show, Jim Farley, Ford head of [global sales](#) and marketing, announced the Personalized [Fuel Efficiency](#) App Challenge. [Software developers](#) can access Ford's OpenXC onboard data platform to come up with their own app solutions.

Ford is offering up to \$50,000 to developers who deliver hardware or software that helps drivers understand the effect of the elements and driving habits on their [fuel economy](#).

"We need to help customers understand the concept of personal fuel economy, based on their own individualized experiences, and give them tools to see, learn and act upon all the information available to know what to expect, how to improve, and even offer guidance in their shopping process," Farley said.

The announcement follows consumer complaints, class action lawsuits and a U.S. [Environmental Protection Agency](#) investigation into the gap between mileage posted on new vehicle stickers and what drivers claim they are getting.

Ford has said it is working with the EPA and discussing whether the government tests need to be revised to better reflect real-world

conditions.

"Given the connectivity in our cars and the proliferation of mobile devices, we have the opportunity to give consumers better and more relevant data to understand what they can expect in on-the-road fuel economy performance," Farley said.

Brendon Kraham, [Google](#) director of global [mobile sales](#) and product strategy, said the in-car mobile experience will soon be integrated into all the devices that connect a consumer's life.

The proliferation of mobile devices is just one shift in car-buying patterns in the wake of the recession.

"Just as everyone is breathing a huge sigh of relief about getting back to something resembling normal sales levels, the real news is that the great recession has dealt a fundamental change to the consumer's mind-set," Farley said. "Now the question is, 'What do they want and expect from us, and are we really ready to respond to what has just taken place?' "

Farley said other post-recession trends include more female, Hispanic and millennial buyers and a redefinition of luxury to include smaller, less pretentious and more affordable cars and crossovers.

"More than 1 billion women will enter the middle class globally by 2020, and many will be buying vehicles for the first time," Farley said, noting women buyers now outpace men in the U.S. and that in other countries they are entering the professional workforce in greater numbers.

Hispanic households now have a total net worth of more than \$500 billion, and there has been a 126 percent increase in households making more than \$100,000 a year.

"Millennials are also a significant opportunity, as they will start entering the family stage in record numbers during the next several years," he said.

As for luxury, Farley cited a Luxury Institute survey that found 60 percent of respondents expect a fully equipped luxury vehicle to cost less than \$60,000.

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