

# GM proposes nationwide zero-emissions vehicle sales mandate

October 26 2018, by Tom Krisher

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Calif., Governor Jerry Brown, center, blasts a Trump administration plan to freeze vehicle emissions standards, saying it threatens public health and the environment, Friday, Oct. 26, 2018, in Sacramento, Calif. Brown was joined by California Air Resources Board Chairperson Mary Nichols, and Attorney General Xavier Becerra. (AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli)

General Motors says it will ask the federal government for one national gas mileage standard, including a requirement that a percentage of auto

companies' sales be zero-emissions vehicles.

Mark Reuss, GM's executive vice president of product development, said the company will propose that a certain percentage of nationwide sales be made up of vehicles that run on electricity or hydrogen fuel cells.

"A national zero emissions program will drive the scale and infrastructure investments needed to allow the U.S. to lead the way to a zero emissions future," Reuss said.

GM, the nation's largest automaker, spelled out the request Friday in written comments on a Trump administration proposal to roll back Obama-era fuel economy and emissions standards, freezing them at 2020 levels instead of gradually making them tougher.

California Gov. Jerry Brown, whose state was one of many opponents to the mileage rollbacks filing objections to the Trump plan, stood in front of Interstate 5 in Sacramento on Friday to urge the cause of cleaner cars and condemn the administration's proposal.

"Foolishly, it mandates gas guzzlers instead of clean and zero-emission vehicles," Brown told reporters as trucks and passenger traffic roared past. "Wrong way to go, Donald. Get with it. Bad."



In this Oct. 26, 2018, file photo, downtown Los Angeles is shrouded in early morning coastal fog and smog. California officials on Friday, Oct. 26, 2018, blasted the Trump administration's plan to freeze vehicle emissions standards, saying it threatens public health and the environment and was based on a flawed scientific analysis. The California Air Resources Board, whose unique authority to set its own vehicle emissions standards would be rolled back under the administration's proposal, submitted more than 400 pages of analysis rejecting the plan and the research behind it. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel, File)

Under a regulation finalized by the Environmental Protection Agency at the end of the Obama administration, the fleet of new automobiles would have to get 36 miles per gallon (15 kilometers per liter) by 2025, 10 miles per gallon (4 kilometers per liter) higher than the current requirement.

But the Trump administration's preferred plan is to freeze the standards starting in 2021. Administration officials say waiving the tougher fuel

efficiency requirements would make vehicles more affordable, which would get safer cars into consumer hands more quickly.

GM on Thursday said it doesn't support the freeze, but wants flexibility to deal with consumers' shift from cars to less-efficient SUVs and trucks.

Its proposed requirement would be based on current standards now required in California and nine other states. Under those rules, GM must sell a minimum of around 2,200 fully electric vehicles in California this year, or about 1.1 percent of the roughly 200,000 cars, trucks and SUVs that it normally sells in the state each year.



In this Sept. 30, 2015, file photo, John Swanton, spokesman with the California Air Resources Board, explains how a 2013 Volkswagen Passat with a diesel engine is evaluated at the emissions test lab in El Monte, Calif. California officials on Friday, Oct. 26, 2018, blasted the Trump administration's plan to freeze vehicle emissions standards, saying it threatens public health and the

environment and was based on a flawed scientific analysis. (AP Photo/Nick Ut, File)

California sets the requirements based on a complex formula that considers the total number of vehicles sold by an automaker and gives credits for fully electric vehicle sales and partial credits for plug-in gas-electric hybrid vehicles. Credits can be banked or sold to other automakers that need them.

GM's proposal would set lower zero-emissions vehicle requirements than California, but spread them to the entire nation. The requirements would gradually increase until 2025.

Reuss said GM's proposal is a starting point for discussions on one set of national fuel efficiency and zero-emissions vehicle standards.

"We want really one national set of standards," he said. "Engineering to multiple standards is very costly and frankly, unnecessary."





This Jan. 25, 2010, file photo, shows a General Motors Co. logo during a news conference in Detroit. General Motors says it will ask the federal government for one national gas mileage standard, including a requirement that a percentage of auto companies' sales be zero-emissions vehicles. Mark Reuss, GM's executive vice president of product development, said the company will propose that a certain percentage of nationwide sales be made up of vehicles that run on electricity or hydrogen fuel cells. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya, File)

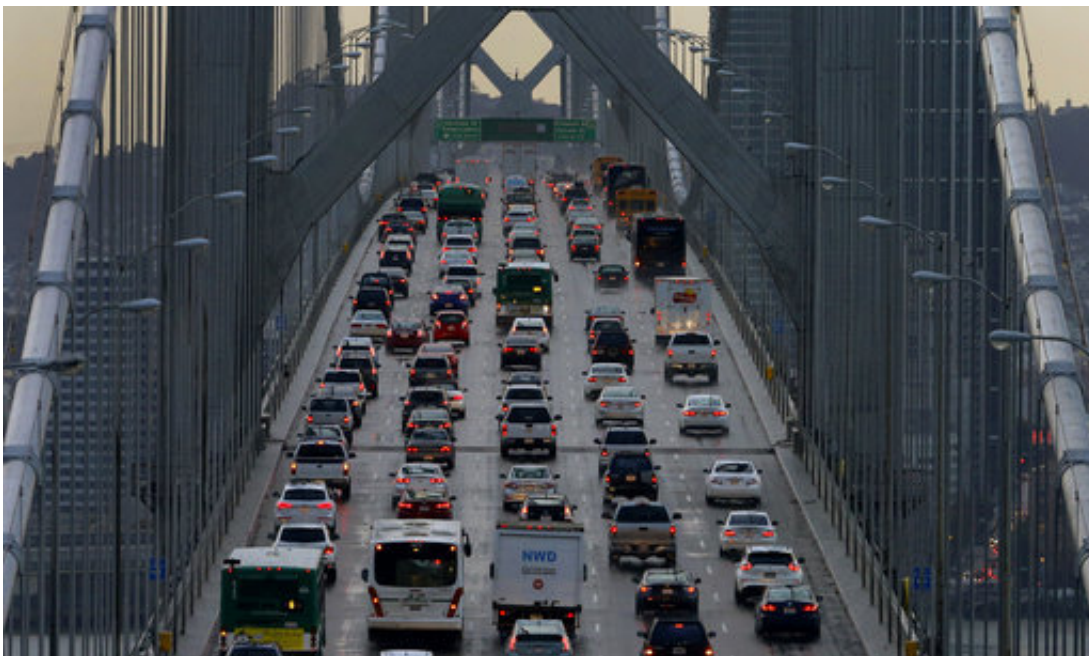
Federal and California gas mileage standards have been the same since 2010. But if President Donald Trump's administration ends up relaxing

the requirements, it could create two standards, one for California and states that follow it, and another for the rest of the nation.

California, whose unique authority to set its own vehicle emissions standards would be rolled back under the administration's proposal, submitted more than 400 pages of analysis rejecting the plan and the research behind it.

California argues freezing emissions standards for six model years would exacerbate climate change, depress research in cleaner technologies and lead to higher spending on gasoline. It also says the plan endangers the U.S. auto industry by allowing other countries to take the lead in developing affordable electric vehicles and batteries.

"I think a lot of the car companies know they've got to build clean, electric or hydrogen cars," Brown said at Friday's interstate news conference. "If they don't, they'll be working for Chinese companies."



In this Dec. 10, 2015, file photo, vehicles make their way westbound on

Interstate 80 across the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge as seen from Treasure Island in San Francisco. California officials on Friday, Oct. 26, 2018, blasted the Trump administration's plan to freeze vehicle emissions standards, saying it threatens public health and the environment and was based on a flawed scientific analysis. (AP Photo/Ben Margot, File)

Separately, 21 attorneys general and five cities signed a letter saying the administration's proposal is illegal.

Trump could challenge California's power to set its own standards, granted under the Clean Air Act, and that could set up a lengthy legal battle since California has pledged to defend its quest to reduce pollution.

The EPA's acting administrator, Andrew Wheeler, has said he wants a single mileage standard nationally. Wheeler "has pledged to work in earnest with states and stakeholders to find a solution as we take comments on the new proposal," agency spokesman James Hewitt said Friday.

Environmental groups still are likely to oppose any changes in the standards. Daniel Becker of the Safe Climate Campaign, an environmental advocacy group, said automakers like GM want the federal government to set standards rather than California because it's easier to lobby for loopholes in Washington.





In this June 24, 2010, file photo, the Los Angeles skyline is seen above the Union Pacific Railroad East Los Angeles Intermodal facility in the City of Commerce, Calif. California officials on Friday, Oct. 26, 2018, blasted the Trump administration's plan to freeze vehicle emissions standards, saying it threatens public health and the environment and was based on a flawed scientific analysis. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)

"The auto companies want to be able to make a small number of electric vehicles and a large number of gas-guzzling SUVs and other trucks instead of complying with the existing mileage and emissions rules," Becker said.

The deadline for written comments on the Trump administration plan were due Friday, with a final decision expected in March.

GM, which offers the all-electric Chevrolet Bolt with 238 miles of

range, and the plug-in hybrid Chevrolet Volt, has invested millions to develop battery technology so additional electric vehicle sales nationwide would help its bottom line. The company has promised to introduce 20 new all-electric vehicles globally by 2023.

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