

Hyundai Elantra Beats Thrifty Toyota Corolla in Consumer Reports' Tests of Five Small Sedans

Posted Monday, June 23, 2008 :: infoZine Staff

Redesigned Toyota Corolla gets excellent 32 mpg in CR's stringent fuel economy tests

Yonkers, NY - infoZine - After testing a group of compacts and subcompacts, Consumer Reports judged the Hyundai Elantra SE best with an "Excellent" overall road test score. But three other compact cars, Subaru Impreza, Toyota Corolla and Ford Focus, also achieved "Very Good" ratings in a report on gas-saving sedans published in the July issue.

The Corolla achieved a very impressive 32 mpg overall in Consumer Reports' real-world fuel economy tests. That's among the best gas mileage CR has seen in a conventional gasoline-powered car with an automatic transmission. Only the smaller Honda Fit (32 mpg) and Toyota Yaris (33 mpg) subcompacts do as well or better.

Two Chevrolets were also tested as part of this group, the Cobalt and Aveo. Both ranked near the bottom of the pack. Among compact sedans, the Cobalt ranks 17th out of 19 vehicles tested. Among subcompacts, the Aveo ranks last among the 12 vehicles tested.

Prices for the six cars in CR's tests range from \$16,205 for the subcompact Aveo LT to \$19,106 for the Impreza 2.5i which is all wheel drive. Even with prices under \$20,000, the best of today's small cars provide many convenience features, comfortable interiors, good refinement, and improved fuel economy.

Full tests and ratings of the test group appear in the July issue of Consumer Reports, which goes on sale June 3. The issue features a cover package of stories on gas-saving cars, with CR's ratings on a total of 31 small sedans and 21 top used cars with great mpg figures. The reports are also available to subscribers of www.ConsumerReports.org.

The Elantra's top rating in the small sedans class shows how far Hyundai has come in the last decade. Its cars used to be unreliable and unrefined, with low scores in CR's tests. Now, some compete with the best in their classes.

Formal evaluations on these vehicles were completed earlier this year, which allowed Consumer Reports to name the Elantra SE its Top Pick in the small sedan category for its Annual April Auto issue. It outpoints the Honda Civic EX with a manual transmission by just a fraction of a point-but also comes with standard electronic stability control, a very important safety feature.

Of the vehicles in this report, Consumer Reports is Recommending the Elantra, Impreza, and Focus. CR doesn't have reliability data yet on the redesigned Corolla. The Cobalt scores too low in CR's road tests to be Recommended; its reliability has been average. The Aveo also scored too low in testing to be Recommended; its reliability has been below average. Consumer Reports only Recommends vehicles that have performed well in its tests, have at least average predicted reliability based on CR's Annual Car Reliability Survey of its more than seven million print and web subscribers, and performed at least adequately if crash-tested or included in a government rollover test.

The Elantra SE is a well-rounded package with a quiet, roomy cabin, a comfortable ride, and nice fit. It provides excellent braking and very secure emergency handling, aided by the SE's standard electronic stability control. Fuel economy is respectable at 27 mpg overall. The Elantra SE (\$17,980 Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price as tested) is equipped with a 132-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine and four-speed automatic that delivers reasonable acceleration and smooth and responsive shifts. The Elantra delivered the shortest braking distances and achieved a Very Good score in CR's emergency handling tests. The nice-sized trunk can be expanded by lowering the 60/40-split rear seatbacks.

The redesigned Impreza is a pleasant and practical car with the most comfortable ride of any small car tested by Consumer Reports. It has more rear-seat room, a quieter cabin, and better fit and finish than the previous model. While its handling is still fairly agile, the Impreza isn't as sporty to drive as its predecessor. Its standard all-wheel-drive helps in slippery conditions but saps fuel economy: its 24 mpg ties for lowest in this group with the Cobalt. The Impreza 2.5i (\$19,106 MSRP as tested) is powered by a 170-hp, 2.5-liter flat-four-cylinder engine and was among the quickest in this group from 0 to 60 mph. The car's optional four-speed automatic transmission shifts smoothly. Braking is very good. The small trunk can be expanded by folding down the 60/40-split rear seatbacks.

The pleasant and refined Corolla provides a comfortable ride, an improved driving position, and a roomier rear seat, compared with

the previous model. But the interior fit and finish isn't quite as good. Aided by optional electronic stability control, handling is responsive and secure if not sporty. The Corolla LE (\$18,404 MSRP as tested) is powered by a 132-hp, 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine that accelerates reasonably and gets excellent fuel economy. In highway driving, the Corolla gets 40 mpg. The four-speed automatic transmission is smooth and responsive. Braking is very good overall. Trunk room is adequate and can be expanded by folding the 60/40-split rear seatbacks.

Ford's freshening of the Focus doesn't hide the fact that the underpinnings for this car's design are nine years old. The Focus was once CR's top-rated small car, but now it rates only midpack. It retains some of its strengths-agile handling, a composed ride, and a roomy interior. But interior fit and finish and noise remain weak points. The Focus SES (\$18,490 MSRP as tested) is equipped with a 130-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine that delivers average performance. The four-speed automatic transmission shifts smoothly. Braking is very good, though stopping distances are longer than in the previous generation Focus. There's ample trunk room, and the trunk can be expanded by folding the 60/40-split rear seatbacks.

The Cobalt offers plenty of equipment for the money, especially when you factor in sale incentives. The Cobalt LT tested carried an MSRP of \$17,450. But it is a lackluster car that falls short in several areas, including powertrain refinement, fit and finish, seat comfort and driving position. Recent tweaks have improved fuel economy and reduced engine noise a bit, but those changes also compromised acceleration, braking, and cornering grip. The Cobalt's 148-hp, 2.2-liter engine delivers decent acceleration but just 24 mpg overall in CR's tests. The optional four-speed automatic transmission shifts smoothly. The moderately sized trunk expands when you fold down the 60/40-split rear seatbacks.

Recent upgrades to the Aveo haven't made it competitive in its class of subcompacts, which include Honda's Fit and the Toyota Yaris. It suffers from a stiff ride, uncomfortable seats, a noisy cabin, clumsy handling, and slow acceleration. Its 25 mpg overall fuel economy is disappointing for such a small and slow car. But at least the Aveo features relatively easy access, decent trunk space, and a tight turning circle. The Aveo LT (\$16,205 MSRP as tested) is powered by a 103-hp, 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine that delivers only fair acceleration. The four-speed transmission shifts smoothly enough. The 60/40-split rear seatbacks fold forward to increase cargo space.

Article link: <http://www.infozine.com/news/stories/op/storiesView/sid/29025/>

[Close Window](#) | [Print this page](#)

ISSN 1082-7315 - © 1994-2008 INFOZINE ® A REGISTERED TRADEMARK.
infoZine ® is generously hosted by KCServers.com.