



## 2013 FORD FUSION

## FRESH FUSION

MSRP: \$21,700-\$32,200

**F**usion is all new for 2013, and the first clue is the front view. Ford formerly owned the luxury car manufacturer Aston Martin, and while that status has largely changed, it's hard to look at Fusion and not see the influence of Aston's suave, sinewy front end.

The new generation of Ford's midsize is offered in three models — S, SE and Titanium — and three engines. A 2.5-liter four-cylinder is joined by a pair of EcoBoost fours (1.6 and 2.0 liters). A hyper-mileage, hybrid version is also offered, with a plug-in hybrid waiting in the wings.

Fusion models are mainly front-wheel-drive. However, an All Wheel Drive version is available, powered by the 2.0 litre four, linked to a six-speed automatic transmission. That's the model I drove most recently.

The test drive coincided with the return of winter weather to our area during the holidays. Not surprisingly, the AWD system made quick work of the mealy mix of snow and rain that we received that week. The confidence that all-wheel-drive adds to winter driving is known to many of us in the Capital District. But AWD is still relatively rare in cars; far more commonplace in crossovers and SUV's. Therefore, the difference that coupling AWD traction with a car's lower center of gravity may still be a surprise to many drivers.

The 2.0 EcoBoost in my Fusion tester was the same engine that I had driven previously in the '13 Escape. EcoBoost is Ford's brand name for a combination of technologies employed in some of their new engines. Direct fuel injection and turbocharging allow a smaller displacement engine to produce power levels normally found only in larger motors. Output in this case is 240 horsepower and



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270 lb. ft. of torque, and as advertised, the 2.0 in Fusion feels comfortably quick (0-60 mph = +/- 7 seconds). Power flow is largely lag-free and the engine sounds and feels refined for its size.

The other objective for the EcoBoost system is to increase fuel economy. EPA says that you can expect 22 mpg's in the city and

31 on the highway; 25 combined with this powertrain. That's the least frugal of Fusion's driveline pairings, owing to the additional weight (3,736 lb.) and added friction of the AWD system. My test drive fell short of the mileage estimates, registering 18 mpg's in a mix of mostly in-town driving.

Fusion rides on a fully independent suspension. Midsize cars are in the market's mainstream, so most are tuned more for ride comfort than corner carving. Fusion follows the trend, with a smooth, cruise-worthy feel. That said, it's also agile enough to enjoy twisty roads, and feels composed in any driving situation.

The interior is well crafted, if subdued in tone. Driver's will find the visibility generally good in all directions. Soft touch points are found almost everywhere you come in contact with up front.

Speaking of touch, on Titanium models like my test car, drivers access many functions via SYNC with MyFord Touch — Ford's infotainment system. A large touch screen at the top of the center stack provides the portal for most adjustments, along with a secondary, Sony-branded control panel directly beneath. I've used this combination in several 2013 Fords.

The company continues to make rolling changes to MyFord Touch, which can be programmed into existing cars as well as new models. This has made the system more user friendly, though it's still operating it still requires study time.

The Sony panel is largely unchanged. The controls are capacitive touch buttons, and won't rec-



ognize the touch of a winter gloved hand, unless the fingertips are made of conductive material ("texting gloves"). And, gloves on or off, the buttons are small targets to find while you're driving. All told, the virtual access isn't as easy as it should be. Voice-activation provides a partial workaround for some features.

Fusion will fit six-footers in both rows. The center seat in back is more suitable to kids, as the center console extension takes away some leg room. Inboard storage spots are generous. So too is trunk space — at 16 cubic feet. Split, rear seat backs fold forward to accommodate long items.

Especially as you move up in class, buyers expect lots of technology in their new cars.

Fusion doesn't disappoint, with a menu of available safety and driver convenience items. The list includes a lane keeping system (helps drivers maintain proper lane position), adaptive cruise control (adjusts cruise settings automatically when slower traffic is encountered), active park assist (takes the heavy lifting out of parallel parking) and blind spot information with cross-traffic alert (alerts the driver to traffic detected in your blind spots). The latter could be a life-saver (or at least a fender bender minimizer) for those who brave the mall parking lots during the holidays.

The 2013 Fusion merges with a heavily trafficked segment that includes Accord, Camry, Malibu, Passat and Sonata. Lots of good options for mid-size buyers.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for the past 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 135 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews on line anytime at [www.timesunion.com/cars](http://www.timesunion.com/cars).