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PAGE 2



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PAGE 2



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PAGE 3



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PAGE 3

## TEST DRIVE

# Late to the Party

## 2018 Ford EcoSport Titanium FWD

DAN LYONS | text  
Special to the Times Union

It's a marketplace fact: Americans are now open to considering cars that are a lot smaller than we used to. Why we've become willing to weigh the merits of wee-sized wheels is unknown. Whatever the reason, once automakers recognized the demand, they scrambled to fill it.

Some of them took a time-honored shortcut, bringing in suitable models already on sale elsewhere, and adapting them for the U.S. market. That's how the Chevy Trax joined the subcompact crossover class, when that segment first caught fire, back in 2015.

It's also the path taken by the Ford EcoSport — the latest arrival to that party-already-in-progress. Though new to Ford's stateside lineup, this built in India, based on Fiesta utility vehicle has been produced and sold in various countries for some time now. Slotting in at the bottom of Ford's utility vehicle ladder, EcoSport is



### 2018 Ford EcoSport Titanium FWD

MSRP: \$19,995 (base) · As Tested: \$24,720

16.8-inches shorter than Escape, the next model up.

While top might be better, left is right when it comes to the hinge location on hatchback cargo doors. Most in this segment have a more conventional top-hinged liftgate, but EcoSport uses a side swinging door instead. If you park at a curb on a two-way street, a right-hinged door will block the path between your cargo and the sidewalk. Ford's left-hinged portal doesn't have that problem, but the door is so large that you'll need a pretty long parking space to allow full access to the cargo bay.

Once inside, there's 20.9-50 cubic-feet of stowage space. That's on par with others in its class (e.g. 18.5-50.8 in Jeep Renegade, 23.2-55.9 in Honda HR-V, 12.4-44.5 in the Mazda CX-3). Back seat bottoms fold forward, which allowed the rear seatbacks to fold flat. However, that's only if no one tall is sitting up front. The front seat pushback necessary to accommodate the long of leg in row one keeps you from being able to go bottoms-up (so to speak) with row two. The better option is to just fold the rear seatbacks forward to their not-quite-flat setting, and use the height-adjustable shelf in the cargo bay to level the load floor.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

**THE FORD ECOSPORT** is the American automaker's entry into the subcompact crossover segment, slotting below the Ford Escape. It's available in S, SE, SES and Titanium trim levels, with all-wheel-drive as an option on all models.

Back seat leg room (36.7 inches) is effectively erased if front passengers are tall. Moving up front, EcoSport's cabin takes a straight forward approach to switchgear. Dash and door panels have a lot of hard plastic, consistent with the competition in this entry-level class. EcoSport is offered in S, SE, SES and Titanium levels.

Here as elsewhere, content ramps up as you climb the trim ladder. SE gets the Sync 3 infotainment interface, with a 6.5-inch touchscreen and Android Auto/Apple CarPlay compatibility. Include the Convenience package (optional on SE, standard on SES and Titanium) and you'll add blind-spot monitoring and rear cross-traffic alert. In addition, touchscreen size is bumped up to 8 inches (large, in a little car) and an upgraded (7-speaker) sound system. SES interiors are

jazzed up with copper colored trim, leather and cloth upholstery, steering wheel shift paddles and a stiffer suspension. Titanium goes full leather on the seats, with 17-inch wheels, and a (disappointing) 10-speaker sound system.

S, SE and Titanium trim levels are packaged with front-wheel-drive and a turbocharged, 1.0L three-cylinder engine, linked to a six-speed automatic transmission. All-wheel-drive is standard on SES models and available on all other trims for an additional \$1,500. The AWD option includes an engine upgrade, to a non-turbocharged, 2.0-liter four-cylinder, also backed by the automatic. My front-wheel-drive Titanium tester had the 1.0L three-cylinder engine. Rated at 123 horsepower and 125 lb.-ft. of torque, the motor is loud and acceleration is leisurely.

*Continued on page 2*

EcoSport's ride is better than you'd surmise, given its small size.



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