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TEST DRIVE

Gas or Grid

2019 Ford Fusion Energi

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

Fusion comes in three flavors: gas-powered, hybrid powered (HEV) or — as in this week's test drive — plug-in hybrid powered (PHEV). Known as Energi (and I don't why it's an "i" not a "y"), the PHEV Fusion is priced at \$34,595. That sticker is \$7,040 more than the base trim, hybrid Fusion (\$27,555).

The financial gulf between the two has largely to do with trim level. Formerly offered in three trims, Fusion Energi is now available only one way — loaded. The models are outfitted in top rung, Titanium trim. A Fusion Hybrid in identical trim stickers for just \$110 less than Energi (\$34,485).

Energi shares the basic components of its hybrid power system with the "plug-less" hybrid Fusion — a 2.0L Atkinson cycle, inline four cylinder gas engine, combined with an AC synchronous motor and a Continuously Variable Transmission. The additional wrinkle with Energi is the plug-in's lithium-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

2019 Ford Fusion Energi
MSRP: \$34,595; As tested: \$36,085

THE FORD FUSION ENERGI is a four-door mid-size available as a gas-powered, hybrid powered (HEV) or plug-in hybrid powered (PHEV) model. The 2019 model features a 20 percent larger battery pack for an increased range.

ion battery pack. The battery's size has been increased for 2019, from its former storage capacity of 7-kWh to 9-kWh. It takes about 7 hours to recharge the battery pack on standard, 120v current; and 2.5 hours on a 240v connection.

The approximately 20 percent increase in size brings with it a boost in electric-only range from 21 miles to



25 miles on a full charge. That edges Energi past Prius Prime (22), and closes ground on Hyundai Ioniq and Kia Optima (both @ 27) on that metric. However, it's still considerably behind Honda Clarity (48) or Chevy Volt (53). On the flip side, Clarity's smaller gas tank means it has an overall (gas and electric) range of about 340 miles, and Volt's total range is 420 miles, compared to 610 in Fusion Energi.

Total system horsepower is 195 with a fully-charged battery, or 188 without. That translates to a low, 8-second trip from 0-60 mph, which is in the ballpark with similarly powered vehicles, and sufficient for normal driving activities. Because of torque-rich nature of electric motor power, it feels faster off the line than the numbers suggest. Fuel economy is impressive: Energi is rated at 103 MPGe (gas and electric), 42 mpg combined (gas only). I logged 34 miles per gallon during my test drive.

The FWD Fusion Energi rides well and corners competently, though not with the gusto of the AWD

equipped Sport, the sportiest handler of the Fusion series. Regenerative braking feeds the battery pack that powers the electric motor. When binders are called on to multi-task, brake feel can be a casualty, and that's the case here — Energi has a grabby brake pedal.

Rear seat legroom measures 37.8 inches, and compares to 36.6 inches in Clarity, 39.3 inches in Accord Hybrid, 38.9 inches in Camry Hybrid, 35.6 inches in Sonata Hybrid and 34.7 inches in the Chevy Volt. It's enough to hold a pair of six-footers in back, with a like size driver.

All hybrids take a hit in trunk space, as the cargo hold shares the same real estate as the hybrid system's lithium ion battery pack. Fusion's spec sheet shows the effects of power source on cargo space. In a gas powered Fusion, the trunk capacity is 16 cubic feet. It drops to 12 in Fusion Hybrid. Owing to the added presence of the plug-in's battery pack, Energi's trunk measures just 8 cu.-ft., and while there's a skinny,

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The Fusion Energi's 25-mile electric-only range inches past that of the Prius Prime.

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