

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

## 2023 Mazda CX-50 2.5 T Premium Plus

MSRP: \$27,550 (2.5S) As Tested: \$43,170



Such is the popularity of compact crossovers, that Mazda fields two of them – the CX-5 and the new, CX-50. Dimensionally, the latest CX is longer, lower and wider than its segment sibling. This latest addition to the lineup is offered in a wide range of trim levels (ten), all of which have standard, All Wheel Drive. The entry model is the 2.5S, which has an MSRP of \$27,550. This week's test drive is

in the range-topping, 2.5 Turbo Premium Plus. Wearing a coat of Polymetal Gray Metallic paint as the sole option (\$395), it had an as-tested price of \$43,170.

The top four trim levels in CX-50 get a twin turbo version of Mazda's 2.5 L four cylinder motor, matched with a six-speed automatic transmission. Fed premium fuel, it's rated at 256 horsepower @ 5,000 rpm, and 320 lb.-ft. of torque @ 2,500 rpm. On a diet of regular, the numbers are 227 horsepower and 310 lb.-ft. of torque. The EPA predicted fuel economy is 23/29/25, and I registered 24 in my week behind the wheel. Selecting the 2.5 turbo adds Sports, Off-Road and Towing settings to the driving modes selections. Max towing with the turbo is 3,500 lb.; up considerably from the normally aspirated 2.5 (2,000 lb.). Choosing the Sport mode is said to tighten up the steering heft. While I felt little difference there, the Sport mode changes in throttle response and shift mapping were eye



*Photos courtesy of the manufacturer*



opening. So set, the engine livens up with a caffeinated surge. I've seen 0-60 times quoted in the upper six second range, and that feels right. While not required for a crossover's job description, this quickness has some practical applications. For example, engaging Sport Mode before merging or passing eases the process considerably. And, there's a fun factor here, too, which is consistent with Mazda's corporate DNA. The CX-50 corners eagerly, with lots of stick. Ride quality is on the firm side of comfortable – stiffer than CX-5. Parking is considerably easier with the bird's-eye view monitor. This desirable feature is standard (and only available) on Premium Plus models.

In top level trim, the interior makes a fine, first impression. With two-tone leather trim and contrast stitching, the materials have a rich look and feel. The mid-dash pod of HVAC controls are easy to operate. Less so the infotainment functions. The access route (a combination of console dial and buttons) is easy to follow, but a design with less steps would be more direct and faster. A 10 1/4" center touchscreen is standard on all trims, as is wireless compatibility with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. CX-50's key interior measurements are similar to the CX-5. Cargo capacity is 31.4 – 56.3 cu.-ft., and rear seat leg room is 39.8". Six footers can (just) fit in back, with like-size folks in row one.

CX-50 is the first Mazda built at the MTM plant (Mazda Toyota Manufacturing), in Huntsville, Alabama. This joint venture figures to yield some interesting products. For example, waiting in the wings for Mazda is an optional, hybrid version of the CX-50, fitted with a Toyota-sourced powertrain.

*A 40 year resident of the Capital District, Dan Lyons is the author of six automotive books, and photographer of more than 200 calendars.*