

Lyons on Wheels

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2025 Mazda CX-50 Hybrid

MSRP: \$30,300 (2.5S Select) As Tested: \$42,065 (Hybrid Premium Plus)



CX-50 is one of five Crossovers in the Mazda lineup. The big news for the compact class entry this year is the availability of hybrid power. The new addition stretches the engine options to three: a 2.5L four cylinder (187 h.p./185 lb.-ft. of torque), a 2.5L twin turbo (227 h.p./310 lb.-ft. (regular fuel), 256/320 premium fuel)) and the new hybrid (219 h.p./163 lb.-ft. of torque). CX-50 is the first Mazda built as part of a joint venture agreement between Mazda and Toyota. The latest edition exhibits the fruits of this agreement, with a hybrid system derived from Toyota. It consists of a 2.5L four cylinder engine, combined with three electric motors, and a hybrid EV battery. It's linked to a Continuously Variable Transmission and features All Wheel Drive. The setup yields 0-60 times in the high seven second range. While that's about a full second behind the turbo four, the CX-50 hybrid is still quick enough, in practical terms. If it feels less lively than the turbo, that's due in part to the difference in transmissions. There are no paddle shifters to play with, and the hybrid's CVT introduces some droning into the equation. Mileage is substantially improved. The EPA says you can expect 39 miles per gallon city, 37 highway and 38 combined. That compares with 25/31/28 in 2.5 equipped models, and 23/29/25 with the turbo. I logged 33 mpg's in a cold, wintry week behind the wheel. Those who tow will want to know that the engine choices bring with them a wide range of ratings. Max towing is 1,500 lb. on hybrids, 2,000 lb. with the base 2.5 and 3,500 lb. with the



Photos are courtesy of the manufacturer.



turbo. The hybrid includes two, available driving modes (Power or Trail), to fine tune throttle response and shift mapping to your specific conditions. While there's little that's truly sporty about the handling of any SUV, CX-50 rivals the best in its class in term of driving dynamics. Ride quality is comfortably firm. Parking and backing are simplified by the available, bird's-eye view camera system. This desirable feature is standard (and only available) on Premium Plus models.

Particularly in top trim, the interior makes a fine, first impression. Two-tone leather trim and contrast stitching lend a premium look and feel. I appreciated the layout of HVAC controls. The mid-dash pod of actual buttons and dials is easy to access and adjust. That's less the case with the infotainment functions. The access route (a combination of console dial and buttons) works well enough, but a more direct design with less steps would be faster and less distracting for the driver. Alternatively, Alexa Built-in (standard), allows the driver to adjust some system controls by voice. A 10.4" center touchscreen is standard on all trims, as is wireless compatibility with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Hybrid models add mpg's but extract a payback in rear seat room and cargo capacity. Rear seat legroom in Hybrid models is 37.8" (two inches less than the non hybrids) and cargo capacity is 29.2-56.3 cu.-ft. (vs. 31.4-56.3). Six footers can (just) squeeze in back, with like-size folks in row one.

Newly available hybrid power is a big plus for the CX-50. It makes one of the more fun to drive options in this segment much more fuel frugal.

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