

On the right path

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Use the brakes and the needle swings to the left, meaning the battery pack is being fed regenerative energy. A swing to the right means there is an energy draw and that comes when the engine is being taxed.

But the big one to watch is the centre tachometer. When you stop, the tack needle drops to the Auto Stop position, meaning you are operating on full battery. If you hit the gas, the engine starts immediately and launches the Tahoe forward. But once you get the hang of pushing lightly on the pedal, the Tahoe moves off under battery power and you can travel along quite nicely at up to 48 km/h. Exceed that and the engine cuts in.

At the bottom of the tach is the driver information centre, giving all kinds of useful stuff like oil life, tire pressure and outside temperature.

But it also gives instant and average fuel consumption, and as a bonus, it also lets you know when you are operating in the four-cylinder (V4) or V8 mode.

Driving down to London, to help my daughter move out of university residence, I found that if I set the cruise at 100 km/h it would easily stay at V4 operation and gave me 9-11L/100 km at around 1,500 rpm. At 80 km/h on a lesser highway I saw 8L/100 km at 1,300 rpm. The longest I went on full battery was 12 km on a gravel road at 40 km/h



It ain't easy being big and green, the 2-mode hybrid in the 2008 Chevrolet Tahoe Hybrid full-size SUV saves up to 25 per cent on fuel consumption by running on battery power, gasoline engine or a combination of both.

Now Highway 401 was a challenge and no one goes 100 km/h even in the right-hand lane. You simply are on and off the cruise so much that you sometimes have to travel in V8 mode and feel the pain of 16-17L/100 km.

But at roughly a half-tank I had covered 403.9 km and used 52.1 litres of fuel. Best of all, my average fuel consumption dropped from an indicated 14.3L/100 km when I picked it up to 13.2L/100 km: And the end of my journey I had covered 672.5 km, used 86.1L of gas and my average was down to 13.1L/100 km.

According to Energuide Canada the Tahoe Hybrid has a fuel rating of 10.5L/100 km (27 mpg) city and 9.8L/100 km (29 mpg) highway so I was pretty close.

Filling the tank back up cost \$113.93. Yikes you say, but consider this. Assuming I had the truck

from new and assuming I worked at maximizing fuel economy, at \$1.20/litre (the day I drove it) on the highway cruising at 10L/100 km 100 means it cost me \$12 to go 100 km. If I was doing 17L/100 km it would have cost \$20 (\$20.40 actually) to go 100 km. So over the entire trip, I saved \$8 every 100 km or about \$53. Add that up over 10 years and it's something to think about.

Of course I know a full size 4X4 is really not the most environmentally friendly, or perhaps even acceptable, vehicle in the current rising gasoline climate, but it sure beats any non-hybrid SUV out there.

So to answer the question, can you have your full-size SUV cake and eat it too, the answer is not yet, but the 2008 Chevrolet Tahoe Hybrid is on the right road.

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