

2010 Taurus has it's own persona

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Canopy with rollover sensor. Ford's Advance Trac electronic stability control (ESP) is standard across the board.

The Taurus comes in four trim levels starting with the SE FWD at \$29,999, the SEL FWD at \$32,299, the SEL AWD at \$34,799 and the Limited at \$40,699. For the record, the SHO starts at \$48,199.

The Taurus Limited as tested here was no lightweight at 4,224 lb. Rather than feeling ponderous, this translates into a sense of great solidity, reminding me of the Mercedes-Benz E350 4Matic not just in terms of pace, but also of interior space and appointments.

The area around Asheville is a combination of wide, rolling freeways and tortuous backwoods two-lane black-top.

The latter would be a challenge for any full-size car. Here, the normally aspirated 3.5-litre V6 had its work cut out for itself especially in the higher reaches of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

I don't bother with paddle shifter transmissions as a rule but the ability to pick a gear and hold it, paid off when climbing up a steep incline.

Out on the highway, the big Taurus was where it was meant to be, clicking off mile after mile in sixth. For covering long distances in comfort, this car is hard to beat.

And it's quiet too thanks to things like triple seals and acoustically laminated windows.

One thing I have to mention is the Taurus also puts you in the mood. Yep, you can dial in five different interior illumination colours.

If there was one gripe, it is the thickness of the B pillar that is hard to see around if you don't use your mirrors. But, this is solved in large part with the Blind Spot Monitoring System. What I like is it not only sees a car coming up in your blind spot and flashes as light on the outside mirror, but when passing, as soon as you get far enough in front, the light goes out and you know it's safe to pull in.

Ford set its sights pretty high by trying to match or better cars like the Audi and Lexus. Thankfully, this has been largely accomplished but I'm personally glad they did not try to build an Americanized A6 or ES350.

The 2010 Taurus has its own persona and that's a good thing.

Ford has two big things going for it. Besides impressing the public by not taking a handout, Ford is also at the start of a whole new product life cycle.

We'll still be seeing the Fiesta subcompact, the Lincoln MXT crossover, a new Focus and a new Mustang among others in the coming months.

And leading the way will be Taurus; the flagship Ford hopes will once again be "the car that changed North America's view of sedans."

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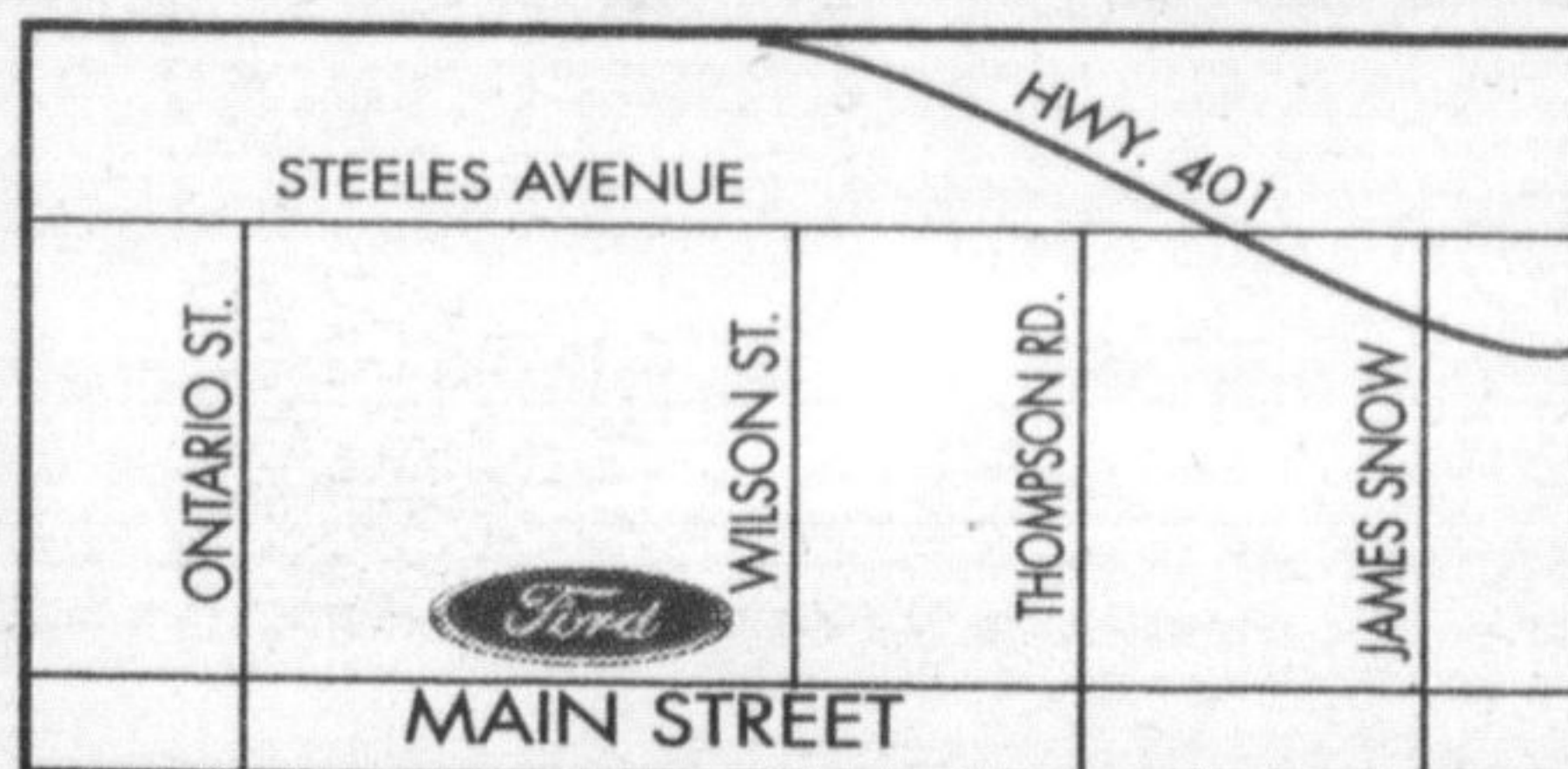
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