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Gas meters may prove useless

A federal regulation requiring a miles-per-gallon meter on a new car's instrument panel is an unproductive approach to fuel conservation, a U.S. Department of Transportation report says.

DOT also says no action should be taken to promote the use of the meters in used cars as a way to encourage more fuel-efficient driving habits.

DOT sponsored a study to determine if the mpg meter would save significant amounts of fuel under typical driving conditions.

The study concludes that the meters have little potential for encouraging fuel saving in congested city and suburban traffic with its low-speed, stop-and-go driving.

The report said city driving, in particular, requires a driver's close attention and he would find it difficult to pay much attention to an mpg meter. Over one half of the nation's driving

occurs on city and suburban streets.

The recommendations were made by Secretary of Transportation William T. Colman, Jr., in a report to the President and Congress required by the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975. The act requested comments on a possible requirement that each new car have a mpg device and the most feasible way of equipping used cars with these instruments.

The meter, which costs a minimum of \$130 installed in a used car, and about \$75 as added equipment in a new car, measures and displays for the driver his rate of fuel consumption.

It takes into account the fuel flow in gallons per hour, the speed in miles per hour and processes this information electronically.

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