

HOW MUCH MORE WILL IT COST YOU TO BUY A HYBRID? STUDY: VEHICLES PRESERVE FUEL, BUT DEplete WALLETS

Kenn Peters Staff writer

Motorists who buy hybrid vehicles may get a sense of satisfaction for doing their part to save the environment and preserve natural resources, but they'll be paying a steep premium for their good deeds.

Every hybrid on the market costs considerably more than its gas-only counterparts, according to a study by Edmunds.com, the online resource for automotive information, based in California.

Additionally, the break-even point for any of the vehicles is an essentially unreachable.

The owner of a Toyota Prius would have to drive 66,500 miles annually for five years with gasoline costing \$10.10 a gallon to break even, Edmunds.com said.

On the low end of the scale, the owner of a Ford Escape Hybrid would have to drive 37,000 miles annually for five years with gas costing \$5.60 a gallon to break even.

The study didn't try to figure out how the hybrids' values will be affected when their batteries reach the end of their life expectancy, said Pam Krebs, a spokesperson for Edmunds.com.

Manufacturers say battery packs should last eight to 10 years, but hybrids haven't been around long enough for significant data to be recorded.

"While some people buy hybrid cars because they appreciate the environmental benefits and enjoy using advanced technology, consumers looking at hybrids solely to save money at the gas pump need to carefully research the cost of actually owning and operating a hybrid," said Phil Reed, of Edmunds.com.

The study showed that owning a hybrid can cost as much as \$5,283 more than its non-hybrid counterpart.

The exception was Edmunds.com's comparison of the Toyota Prius to the Toyota Camry LE.

Over the first five years of ownership, the Camry is expected to cost \$81 more than the Prius.

Contact Kenn Peters at 470-2244 or kpeters@syracuse.com

Illustration: GRAPHIC: Hybrids vs. conventional vehicles. Buy a Hybrid. The Post-Standard. Note: For text see microfilm.

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A graphic published on Sunday's Auto page contained incorrect information regarding the costs of owning two vehicles. The total cost to own a Toyota Corolla over five years is \$26,963, according to Edmunds.com, an online resource for automotive information. When added to the car's true market value when purchased, it would cost \$41,747 to own a Corolla over five years. The cost to own a Prius hybrid vehicle would be \$29,131 over five years, and \$50,520 when the car's true market value is added, according to Edmunds.com. Thus, the Prius would cost \$8,773 more than a Corolla over five years.