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## **My Lead Foot, My Hybrid Car — and Your Gas Saving: Cameron on Transportation**

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I like to go fast. Really fast. Nothing makes me happier than hurtling along to Boston on Acela at 145 mph, even if those sprints are brief, or catching the jet-stream on a flight and hitting 600 mph.

And nothing frustrates me more, like you, than being in slow-moving, bumper-to-bumper traffic on Interstate 95, that highway's normative state.

But I'm also thrifty, some might even say "cheap," especially when it comes to buying gasoline. That's why

I recently traded in my powerful six-cylinder sedan for a very cool electric hybrid.

While I used to get about 20 miles-per-gallon in the sedan, the hybrid now gets me 40- to 45- miles-per-gallon. That means I'm using half as much gasoline (and contributing half of what I used to pay in gas taxes to fund road repairs). Those who drive all-electric cars, like Teslas, pay nothing toward Connecticut roads.

The hybrid achieves these impressive miles-per-gallon stats because it runs much of the time on electricity. Its battery gets charged every time I hit the brakes, turning the engine into an electric generator.

But to get the best mileage, I've also had to change the way I drive: accelerating more slowly and relying on the visual feedback from the car's dashboard display. It's a game the car has taught me to play: keep the monitor display in the green, not the red. I'm hooked.

Oh, this car can accelerate quickly when I need to, by slipping out of "Eco" mode into "PWR." But I'm constantly challenging myself to maximize miles-per-gallon by driving and braking efficiently. I'm finally losing my lead foot, compromising my love of speed for saving money.

### **You Can Save Gasoline — 11 Tips**

Whatever kind of car you drive, four, six or eight cylinders, you can save gasoline by avoiding these mistakes:

—Don't accelerate too quickly, especially from a dead stop. Pretend there's a raw egg between your foot and the gas pedal and ease into it.

—While driving down the road, if you see the light ahead turn red, take your foot off the gas and coast to a stop. It will also save wear and tear on your brakes.

—Keep your vehicle as light as possible. No need to waste fuel hauling extra weight.

—Keep your tires properly inflated, but not over-inflated. Softer tires increase road friction. Over inflation causes more wear on your tires.

—Keep your gas tank cap tightly closed. If you get air in your gas tank, your engine has to burn more fuel.

—Don't idle unnecessarily. Sitting still can burn one to two ounces of fuel a minute or about a gallon an hour that's giving you zero miles per gallon.

—When you gas-up, do it in the morning when the station's underground tanks are coldest and the fuel is the densest.

—Replace your engine's air filter as often as recommended by the manufacturer. A clogged air filter has to

work harder to combust the fuel, reducing efficiency.

—Use your car’s air conditioner sparingly. But for 60 mph highway driving, keeping your windows closed actually improves mileage by cutting down on drag.

—Use your car’s cruise control to avoid unnecessary braking and acceleration, the two enemies of good miles per gallon.

—Just slow down. Driving at 60 mph instead of 70 can save you two to four miles per gallon.

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*Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the Commuter Action Group, sits on the Merritt Parkway Conservancy board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at [CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com](mailto:CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com).*