

2013 Lexus GS 350 AWD

By Frank S. Washington

There was more to the 2013 Lexus GS 350 AWD than just the spindle grille that is the new face of the brand.

This all-wheel-drive sedan was smooth, quiet and relatively spacious for a midsize car; all attributes that are common to any Lexus. But the Lexus GS 350 was also fun to drive. That's somewhat new for Lexus.

The car was powered by a 3.5-liter V6 that made 306 horsepower and 277 foot-pounds of torque. The engine combined direct fuel injection and port injection.

Though the combination of port and direct injection represented the latest generation of Lexus' engine DNA, the rudiments for the powerplant came from the company's parts bin.

However, platform technology for the car was new and it made a big difference in the driving dynamics of the GS 350 AWD. Power was put to all four wheels all the time with a rear-wheel-bias – 30 percent fore and 70 percent aft – all-wheel-drive system.

It had the capability of a 50-50 torque split but it could not send power side-to-side. That was one of several areas where the Lexus GS could stand a little refinement.

Still, the Lexus GS 350 AWD provided a great ride. There was even a little engine growl under assertive acceleration.

Handling was precise, passing on two-lane rural highways was quick and accurate. It didn't take long for the GS 350 AWD to get out and then around slow moving vehicles and then back into the lane.

The car had four driving modes, Normal, ECO mode revised throttle mapping, seat heating, and the climate control systems for better fuel economy, SPORT S mode revised throttle mapping and transmission shifting priorities to fully exploit the capabilities of the powertrain. In other words, the car held gears longer and shifted at higher

VEHICLE OF THE WEEK

2013 Lexus GS 450h Sedan

The stylish new 2013 Lexus GS 450h Sedan – which starts at \$59,450 – offers invigorating handling, next generation technology and unforgettable styling.

The 450h's 3.5 liter, Four Cam 24-valve V-6 Engine with Dual Variable Valve Timing delivers plenty of kick, going from 0-60 in 5.6 seconds.

Lexus Enform with App Suite gives riders the ability to make dinner reservations, order movie tickets and more on the fly using the industry's first available 12.3 inch high resolution split-screen multimedia display.

The responsive interior allows passengers to control the audio system, rear-seat climate zone, power rear sunshade and heated outboard seats, all from the comfort of Cabernet Leather trim.

With a class leading 10 standard airbag system, night view and driver attention monitor, the 450h also delivers innovative safety.

From this smooth running hybrid forward, there is no going back.



RPMs.

The SPORT S+ mode, available with F SPORT and Luxury packages, engaged a sport setting comprised of the adaptive variable suspension, steering system and Vehicle Dynamic Integrated Management (VDIM) together with the powertrain enhancements of SPORT S mode.

In other words, the suspension became much stiffer, the electronic power steering reacted quicker to driver input and the shift points were at even higher RPMs. The luxury package that accompanied the SPORT S+ mode was

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TriMet Fares: Questionable Decisions & Explanations

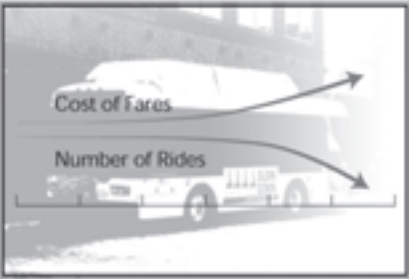
TriMet eliminated the popular Fareless Square and multi-zone pricing. It also increased and changed fares to a single flat rate. That rate is higher than fares in all major west coast cities. For example, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles and San Diego fares are less—especially for the disabled and elderly.

TriMet claims it wants to improve its service to the community. Transit experts agree that an increase in passengers is the best measure of improved transit service. What did these fare changes yield? A loss of nearly four hundred thousand passenger rides in the last year.

TriMet management justified these unpopular changes by pointing the finger at us—the people who keep the system running—your operators, dispatchers, mechanics and customer service folks. They blame the cuts on the cost of our medical insurance. As we've already stated, we expect to pay more for health insurance in the coming years. Even today, we are paying more for health insurance than TriMet management.

We decided to investigate the reasons for TriMet's negative fare changes. What we found is disturbing and indicates dishonesty.

What is disturbing is that, in 2011, TriMet managers claimed the agency had dire financial problems. At the same time, they also secretly decided to purchase a new "smart card" fare system that will be more expensive to operate. In good financial times, that new system might be a sensible decision. Just like buying a bigger house or newer car is a sensible decision when the



Relationship of Fare Increases and Transit System Usage

family budget has a comfortable surplus. But, is it sensible for a financially-strapped agency to take on a \$20+ million debt for a new technology?

What is dishonest is that the publicly stated reason for the fare increase differs from reality. A 2011 agency internal report stated that, in order to purchase and use the new fare system, TriMet would have to eliminate Fareless Square, multi-zone pricing and raise fares.

The timing is also suspicious. General Manager McFarlane announced that, because of worker benefits, the agency will need to cut service by 11% starting in 2017. Not so coincidentally, that same 2011 internal report states that paying off the new system will cost at least \$2 million per year for 12 years, starting in...2017.

Bottom line, it appears that the drastic fare changes, fare increases, threats of future service cuts and reduced worker benefits are going to pay for TriMet's latest technology purchase. It's time the agency stopped deliberately misleading the public by chalking everything up to the cost of workers benefits.

The TriMet report, TriMet passenger data and McFarlane's statements are available at www.transitvoice.org.

Sincerely, Your Transit Workers



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