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Transitional strategies for a sustainable automotive industry: a pragmatic approach to environmental ratings systems

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Abstract

This paper presents an environmental ratings system for cars. In so doing, we reject an approach based on what 'should' be measured in an ideal world in favour of pragmatism: what can we do with the information available? The ratings system is therefore designed to allow the environmental performance of cars currently available on the market to be compared in terms of how far they exceed statutory requirements on regulated emissions. While this approach has a number of weaknesses, which we discuss in the paper, it has the merit of immediate applicability to any market in the world. Given that environmentalists are searching for transitional strategies towards sustainability, a ratings system based on current products offers all interested parties a useful starting point. The ratings system is illustrated with a few cars simply to show how it might work in practice.