Energy Intensities of Flying and Driving

Last year, I issued a report comparing energy intensities of flying and driving from 1970 through 2010. The main finding of that study was that, while flying domestically in the U.S. used to be much more energy intensive than driving, that is no longer the case. Indeed, in 2010—the last year examined in that study—the energy intensity of driving was 57% greater than the energy intensity of flying.

The present study extends the analysis through 2012. Furthermore, this study corrects the publically available flying data for two inconsistencies: (1) the estimates of the energy intensity of flying are based on different carrier groups for fuel consumed and passenger miles flown, and (2) the estimates of the energy intensity of flying include cargo operations (paid freight and mail).

The results indicate that, even before the corrections are made to the flying data, the energy-intensity advantage of flying over driving has increased from 2010 to 2012. Furthermore, the net effect of the corrections to the flying data is that the advantage of flying has increased even further.

Flying, driving, energy intensity, fuel consumed, vehicle fuel economy

Unlimited

None

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