

Change is afoot

BY JOE SAGE

We last drove the gen-three Chevy Equinox at its media launch in 2018. That's both a long time and a quick time—nothing has changed and everything has changed. Disruptions to supply chains and factory flows industrywide slowed new models, with planning simultaneously devoted to significant change. The latest Equinox is clearer in the context of this matrix in great flux.

General Motors has simplified some things—discontinuing Pontiac, Oldsmobile and Saturn and handing off Opel and Saab, then declaring a growing (but not unique) disinterest in cars, with Malibu now Chevrolet's only remaining sedan (while Corvette and Camaro also still hold on to their niches). In parallel, GM has declared a commitment to a fully electric lineup within the next very few years. Their abandonment of sedans puts a spotlight on crossovers and SUVs, so we should expect the very best out of these. Or perhaps not, if plan-

ners are focused on the next wave of EVs.

Roll back to 2017, and Chevy cars were plentiful: Camaro, Corvette, Cruze (including a diesel), Impala, Malibu (including a hybrid), Sonic, Spark and Volt (plus the Bolt EV was tallied with cars then). Malibu, the only sedan still standing today, is expected to continue, with a new gen-ten arriving in 2025 (whether gas, EV or both as yet unstated), and Corvette is adding an EV variant for 2024.

In 2017, Chevy SUVs comprised just four: the prior Equinox, tiny Trax and big Tahoe and Suburban. By the end of this year, there will be almost three times as many. The new Equinox arrived in 2018 (with three engines: 1.5L, 2.0L and 1.6L diesel, all turbos), and Traverse was added. Equinox axed the diesel in 2019, and Blazer was added. In 2021, a new small SUV arrived bearing the old Trailblazer name, while Equinox ditched its 252-hp 2.0 turbo, leaving just the 170-hp 1.5T.

On the EV path, Bolt EV and the new, larger Bolt EUV (now tallied with crossovers) will be joined by Equinox EV and Blazer EV derivatives later this year, making four out of eleven in the SUV lineup electrics. (It is not yet crystal clear whether internal combustion Equinox and Blazer will continue, which could mean four out of nine would be EVs.)

Long gone in most all lineups are the simple days of subcompact, compact, midsize and full-size. Categorizing, as with anything from houses to spouses, has become complex. You have to check attributes overall and find the best fit.

Performance in our 2023 Equinox RS AWD was fine till our first corner, where power dropped and shift delayed in a simple 90-degree turn. It was the same when seeking to change lanes on the freeway. A horsepower boost this year seems to have recognized a need, but only moves from 170 to 175 (not a tweak, but a whole new engine, LSD versus LYX). A quick nighttime freeway run was more satisfying. But the following day, power and shift let

us down again while trying to scoot over a lane at a time toward an exit—a routine situation where power equals safety. On a drive up I-17 through Black Canyon and beyond, power was lost to unusual downshifts on consistent grades.

Absence of the larger engine option made power-to-weight ratios intriguing in the whole Chevy lineup. The chart at right, setting aside degrees of off-roading and with the three-row option speaking for itself, is presented in sequence by vehicle length. This (EVs aside) correlates well with horsepower range and vehicle weight. Price can be an exception—noticeable, for example, in Trax versus Trailblazer, or base Traverse vs base Blazer.

Note that the power-to-weight ratio (hp/lb) of Equinox with the discontinued 252-hp 2.0L was up with Tahoe and Suburban, or better, which could drag interest away from much else on the list. With that engine gone, the pecking order overall falls more into line. Whether this diminishes or clarifies Equinox's spot is open to interpretation.

Either way, it seems to have worked—Chevrolet sales overall were up 5.59 percent in 2022, and among Chevy SUVs and crossovers, Equinox remains king, at over 210,000 units, more than dou-

CHEVROLET SUV-CROSSOVER FAMILY: POWER-TO-WEIGHT

In order by length	length (in)	rows	hp	weight (lb)	hp/lb	tow (lb)	price range
Bolt EV	163.2	TWO	200	3589-3624	.056-.055	---	\$26,500-29,700
Bolt EUV	169.5	"	200	3680-3715	.054-.054	---	27,800-32,300
Trailblazer	173.5	"	137	3029-3252	.045-.042	1000	22,400-26,500
Trax (all-new now 2024)	178.6	"	137	** na - 4145	na - .033	na	20,400-23,900
Equinox	183.1	"	175	3274-3512	.053-.050	1500	26,600-33,400
(with discontinued 2.0T)	183.1	"	252	3274-3665	.077-.069	1500-3500	na
Equinox EV (coming: 2024)	na	"	210-290	na	na	na	from ±\$30,000
Blazer	191.8	"	228-308	3918-4322	.058-.071	1500-4500	35,100-46,400
Blazer EV (coming: 2024)	na	"	up to 557	na	na	na	47,595-65,995
Traverse	205.9	THREE	310	** 4310 - na	.072 - na	1500-5000	34,520-54,200
Tahoe	210.7	"	*355-420	5473-5904	.065-.071	7600-8400	54,200-77,400
Suburban	225.7	"	*355-420	5616-6072	.063-.069	7800-8300	56,900-80,100

*Diesel available on Tahoe-Suburban. HP is lower, torque higher, so chart compares gasoline hp only, for best direct comparison.
 **Weights third-party sourced where not stated by GM.

ble the sales of second-place Tahoe or close-third Traverse (at just over and just under 100,000).

Just as surely, it redirects interest toward the impending—already beginning—shift to an all-EV Chevrolet lineup. And, as you can see by the Bolt's power figures, this will shake the chart up anew.

Shoppers may choose accordingly from among the new lineup, possibly look for a great used Equinox with a bigger engine, or wait for the EVs. The one-engine 2023 Equinox seems to be as suspected—all part of a much larger picture. ■

For 2023, Equinox receives a few new colors and finish details, a brake upgrade, and a modest boost in horsepower. Our RS is next-to-top of four trims, still without seat-and-mirror memory or drive modes, and the audio system is nothing fancy.



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Ramos Arizpe, CZ, Mexico
ENGINE / TRANSMISSION	Mexico / Mexico
CONTENT	30% US/Canada / 28% Mexico
ENGINE	1.5L turbo DOHC DI VVT 16v 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	175 hp / 203 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	na
TRANSMISSION	6-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	AWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, tuned coils, direct-acting stblzr bar; R: four-link indep
STEERING	elec pwr-assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	Duralife rotors, low-drag calipers: F: 11.8; R: 11.3
WHEELS / TIRES	19x7.5J alum; P235/50R19
TURNING CIRCLE	(19-in wheels) 41.6 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	(19-in wheels) tbd
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	183.1 / 107.3 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	(w sunrf) 38.2 / 36.9 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	40.9 / 39.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	29.9 / 63.9 cu.ft
CURB WEIGHT / DISTRIB	3478 lb
TOW CAPACITY	1500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 15.6 gal
MPG	24/30/26 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (SR)	\$32,000
PAINT: Radiant Red Tintcoat	495
RS LEATHER PKG: jet black RS leather seats, Bose premium 7-spkr audio	1580
POWER SUNROOF	1495
SAFETY-INFOTAINMENT PKG: (Infotainment Pkg) heated steering wheel, USB ports, 120V power outlet, infotainment 3 Plus 8-in touchscreen, wireless Apple/Android, Bluetooth audio streaming, voice recog, apps/personalization; (Safety Pkg) HD surround view, heated/power/manual-fold mirrors w turn signals, adaptive cruise	1200
FRONT LICENSE PLATE BRACKET	40
DESTINATION CHARGE	1395

TOTAL \$38,205
 (Note: prices have increased, see below.)

2023 CHEVROLET EQUINOX LINEUP

	FWD	AWD
LS	\$26,600	\$28,200
LT	27,700	29,300
RS	30,700	32,300
Premier	31,800	33,400