

New Transit adds safety as standard



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How does Ford follow the Transit? With an even better one is the obvious answer as Ireland's best-selling van gets a significant upgrade. The Ford Transit has been a best seller for so long that we could easily take it for granted but Ford is not doing that and the latest version is a significant improvement. *Michael Moroney* joined van-land for an extended test drive

EVERYBODY takes note when Ford brings changes to the Mondeo or the Focus but how many drivers take note when a new Transit hits the road? The Ford Transit is a hugely successful van range.

The Transit is rated as among the top three Ford vehicles sold here in Ireland. And it topped the vehicle registrations in Ireland for September this year, with more Transits registered than any other vehicle during that month.

So don't be too surprised when I get enthusiastic about the Transit. I've had a medium length low roof Transit on the road for a lengthy test drive and despite its relative size compared with a car, this new Transit has comfort features that many cars could aspire to.

The special features about this new Transit range are its power, comfort and impressive safety features. It's obvious that Ford values the range, given the level of upgrade in the new model.

In power terms, there is now a choice of two engines. I had the smaller 2.2 litre TDCi turbo-diesel under me, driving the front wheels of the Transit. Those with big load carrying needs can opt for the bigger 2.4 litre TDCi engine and the option of two rear wheel drive axle ratios.

This engine delivers significantly more power than the entry engine on the previous Transit range. Power lifts from 75bhp to 110bhp with this new model.

Even more important is the lift in engine torque, because this is where the real pulling ability comes in. Engine torque kicks in at a much lower level of engine revs and then delivers 25 per cent more torque. So you can accelerate with a significant pace with the new Transit.

Ford tells us that it's difficult to examine fuel consumption in vans on a like-for-like basis. I had the Transit on a lengthy test drive and despite its size and 50 per cent loading, for most of the time I found that it could knock sparks off some of the car competition in terms of economy. The Transit economy levels would put some of the more flashy 4x4 commercials and MPVs to shame in an economy sense.

Ford's only guidance in terms of economy comes with the Ford Transit Torneo, which is the factory-built passenger version of the Transit. And here the economy figures at 7.6 litres/100km (about 37mpg) are impressive.



Ford has made it easier for the driver to operate at economical levels by placing a green band on the rev counter. This encourages steadier driving within the most economical engine speed range and it's a simple and useful feature.

The new Transit has delivered well on comfort. The test model had an impressive level of seat adjustment, which I understand is part of the standard deal. The steering wheel adjustment adds to the driving comfort.

Even passengers rated the comfort levels highly, except for the regular din of the diesel engine underneath. There are loads of storage areas in the new Transit and I especially liked the folding front tray that doubles up as a lunch table for the busy driver, with two coffee mug slots included. And this tray is solidly fitted and had no rattles.

The Transit is easy to get into and out of, with wide doors. Electric windows were included in the test van and they are especially useful and safe for those early-morning runs when coming out on the road with fogged-up windows.



Among the useful features now standard on the Transit is the automatic door locking system when the van takes off, securing the load even if you forgot to lock all doors. This system can be deactivated by the driver if needed. The central locking is a particularly useful feature for delivery van drivers, again securing the load for those few vital minutes when making the load handover.

Safety gets a high priority from Ford in the new Transit. The big news is that Ford is fitting electronic stability programme (ESP) to all new Transits from January 2007 at a marginal additional cost.

The new Ford Transit's ESP system constantly monitors via sensors the desired and actual driving direction. In case of significant differences it interacts with the brake and motor management system in order to stabilise the vehicle.

Under slippery road conditions or during extreme steering manoeuvres, ESP applies brake and torque adjustments as required to help avoid dangerous over-steering and under-steering.

There is ample independent testing evidence to show that ESP stabilises the vehicle and enhances the benefits of the standard anti-lock braking and electronic brakeforce distribution systems.

And lastly, it's a van, so can it carry a load? The new Transit can carry three euro pallets in the short wheelbase version, rising to four in the medium wheelbase van. Load lengths range from 2.582m in the short wheelbase version to 2.949m in the medium unit and over 4.1m in the jumbo van. Gross payload capacities range from 993kg for the smallest van to 2.1 tonnes for the bigger models, all keeping within the load ratings.

Ford has kept the price for the new Transit modest. The entry price is e20,874, that's less than e200 more than the same van a year ago. But you need to specify what you want your van to do, and with 117 models in the Transit range - take the rest of the day off to make that final choice!

- Michael Moroney