

The midsize pickup market is red hot now, and this is a very good thing. As almost no full-size pickup offers an eight-foot bed anymore, anyway, and powertrains and tow capacities increasingly overlap between the two segments, midsize pickups have suddenly matured as a great choice for many traditionally full-size-only pickup buyers. And GM is all in.

An emerging benchmark over the past model year or two in particular has been 300 horsepower in a midsize truck. Chevrolet's midsize Colorado now offers three builds of their 2.7-liter four-cylinder turbo powerplant—the Turbo at 237 hp with 259 lb-ft of torque, towing 3,500 pounds; the Turbo Plus at 310/390, towing 7,700; and the Turbo High-

Output at 310/430, also towing 7,700.

Of six trim levels (or eight variants, with the lowest two offering RWD as well as 4x4), only the top ZR2 off-roader offers the High-Output engine standard (with a lower tow capacity of 6,000 pounds), though there are other optional combinations.

The new, first-ever Colorado Trail Boss in particular—as we are driving here—offers an enticing combination of lower-trim level simplicity with an upper level of off-road-worthiness. This gives you a mid-level price—just \$4,500 more than a base-level WT work truck, but almost \$10,000 less than the ZR2—with a high level of capability, almost as high as the ZR2 itself.

Better still, its simplicity is itself a plus to many

buyers—a truck with tough-duty bones and an interior you don't mind getting muddy or having critters, two-legged or four-, running in and out of.

Specifications vary among them. Ground clearance ranges from 7.9 (WT/LT) to 10.5 inches (ZR2), with Trail Boss at 9.5 inches—not quite a ZR2 but well above the midpoint, a solid example of the positioning of this truck overall. Other details put Trail Boss closer to the lower trucks than to the ZR2. But ten grand is ten grand, and your own personal math will tell you what level works for you.

The truck's beefy tire and wheel setup seems to give it a noticeably larger turning circle in town,

though no specification is given. As with the powertrain's appropriately burly gearing and grunt, however, it's all suited to its most ambitious duties—off-highway—and on the plus side is a reminder, or a positive feeling, of the truck's general degree of bigger-truck strength and capability.

Adjusted for its truckworthiness, the Trail Boss proved very responsive in freeway traffic, nimbly picking its speeds and lanes, all with no pushback from the big tires. Though a formerly full-size truck driver's ego may be a bit humbled next to a much larger truck, the ride is high and commanding.

We also noticed we turned heads in this. Badging is very minimal (a nice touch), so was it recognizable to Colorado cognoscenti? Or carrying extra

appeal in its own right? There's no telling, but it's always a good feeling.

On a comprehensive off-pavement run, we did one pass in 4Auto, then another in 4HI, both working just fine. We dabbled in modes, which include self-explanatory normal and tow/haul, as well as a choice among off-road, terrain and Baja, any of which may sound just right. But Baja is for high-speed sand runs, and terrain is for low-speed rock crawling with throttle control—it's off-road you might use here, if any, though performance is generally great right out of the box.

Though ignition is keyless, you need a key for the door, suggesting perhaps a struggle between price point and available parts—cheaper key-operated locks were probably on hand, a keyed ignition perhaps not. Keyless-everything is first available at the LT level, but LT adds cost and fanciness, both of which the Trail Boss seeks to avoid.

We have high appreciation for the principle behind the new Colorado Trail Boss—off-road capability approaching ZR2, but with a simpler interior that both keeps costs down and lets you treat it a little tougher. And on this it delivers. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Wentzville, Missouri
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION	USA/USA
CONTENT	US/Canada 45% / Mexico 23%
ENGINE	2.7L inline-4 turbo 16v DOHC VVT
	dir inj w active fuel mgmt and stop-start
HP/TORQUE	Turbo Plus: 310 hp / 390 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	8L90 8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	4x4
REAR AXLE	3.42 ratio, G80 limited-slip diff
SUSPENSION	F: indep coil-over shocks, twin-tube shocks; R: solid axle w semi-elliptic two-stage multi-leaf springs, twin-tube shocks
STEERING	elec pwr assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 13.4; R: 13.3; Duralife rotors
WHEELS	18x8.5 aluminum
TIRES	P265/65R18 all-terrain
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	213.2 / 131.4 in
TRACK (F/R)	Trail Boss 66.2 / 66.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	Trail Boss 9.5 in
APPR / DEP / BRKOVER	30.5 / 22.4 / 21.0°
TURNING CIRCLE	na
HEADROOM (F/R)	40.3 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	45.2 / 34.7 in
WEIGHT	4971 lb
GVWR	6250 lb
MAX PAYLOAD	1587 lb
TOW CAPACITY	7700 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	na / 21.3 gal
MPG	17/21/19 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$37,000
PAINT: Radiant Red Tintcoat	495
TRAIL BOSS CONVENIENCE PKG: sliding rear window, rear window defrost, cruise	375
TRAIL BOSS CONVENIENCE PKG II: EZ Lift and Lower tailgate, tailgate keyed cylinder lock, Stowflex tailgate & storage, 8-way driver power seat & power lumbar	545
ADVANCED TRAILERING PKG: incl app	620
BEDLINER: spray-on	475
GENERATOR: 220 amps	150
FRONT LICENSE PLATE MOUNT	40
DESTINATION CHARGE	1495

TOTAL **\$41,195**
 2023 model. Watch for release of 2024 pricing.

CHEVY COLORADO LINEUP (2023)

	2WD	4X4
WT	\$29,200	\$32,500
LT	31,600	34,900
Trail Boss		▼ 37,000
Z71		39,890
ZR2		46,800

Magic in the upper middle

THE OVERALL FORMULA REVEALS PLENTY OF UPSIDES IN THIS NEW MODEL'S POSITIONING

BY JOE SAGE

