

# SHOWROOM

## JOURNAL

### GM says new Volt to get 230 mpg in city driving

WARREN, Michigan - General Motors Corp. said Tuesday its Chevrolet Volt rechargeable electric car should get 230 miles per gallon (98 kilometers per liter) of gasoline in city driving, more than four times the current champion, the Toyota Prius.

The Volt is powered by an electric motor and a battery pack with a 40-mile (65-kilometer) range. After that, a small internal combustion engine kicks in to generate electricity for a total range of 300 miles (480 kilometers). The battery pack can be recharged from a standard home outlet.

GM is marketing the 230-mile (370-kilometer) figure following early tests using draft guidelines from the US Environmental Protection Agency for calculating the mileage of extended range electric vehicles.

The EPA guidelines, developed with guidance from automakers, figure that cars like the Volt will travel more on straight electricity in the city than on the highway. If a person drives the Volt less than 40 miles (65 kilometers), in theory they could go without using gasoline.

Highway mileage estimates — which are generally higher than city ones — for the Volt have yet to be released using the EPA's methodology.

"We are confident the highway (mileage) will be a triple-digit composite," GM CEO Fritz Henderson said.

If the figure is confirmed by the EPA, which does the tests for the mileage posted on new car door stickers, the Volt would be the first car to exceed triple-

digit gas mileage.

EPA said in a statement Tuesday that it has not tested a Volt "and therefore cannot confirm the fuel economy values claimed by GM." The agency said it applauded "GM's commitment to designing and building the car of the future — an American made car that will save families money, significantly reduce our dependence on foreign oil and create good-paying American jobs."

GM has produced about 30 Volts so far and is making 10 a week, said during a presentation of the vehicle at the company's technical center in the Detroit suburb of Warren.

Henderson said charging the volt will cost about 40 cents a day, at approximately 5 cents per kilowatt hour.

Most automakers are working similar plug-in designs, but GM could be the leader with the Volt, which is due in showrooms late in 2010.

Toyota's Prius, the most efficient car now sold in the US, gets 48 miles per gallon (20 kilometers per liter) of gas. It is a gas-electric hybrid that runs on a small internal combustion engine assisted by a battery-powered electric motor to save gasoline.

Although Henderson would not give details on pricing, the first-generation Volt is expected to cost near \$40,000, making it cost-prohibitive to many people even if gasoline returns to \$4 per gallon.

The price is expected to drop with future generations of the Volt, but GM has said

government tax credits of up to \$7,500 and the savings on fuel could make it cost-effective, especially at 230 miles per gallon (98 kilometers per liter).

"We get a little cautious about trying to forecast what fuel prices will do," said Tony Posawatz, GM's vehicle line director for the Volt. "We achieved this number and if fuel prices go up, it certainly does get more attractive even in the near-term generation."

The mileage figure could vary as the guidelines are refined and the Volt gets further along in the manufacturing process, Posawatz said.

GM is nearly halfway through building about 80 Volts that will look and behave like the production model, and testing is running on schedule, Posawatz said.

Two critical areas, battery life and the electronic switching between battery and engine power, are still being refined, but the car is on schedule to reach showrooms late in 2010, he said.

GM is simulating tests to

make sure the new lithium-ion batteries last 10 years, Posawatz said, as well as testing battery performance in extremely hot and cold climates.

"We're further along, but we're still quite a ways from home," he said. "We're developing quite a knowledge base on all this stuff. Our confidence is growing."

The other area of new technology, switching between battery and engine power, is proceeding well, he said, with engineers just fine-tuning the operations.

"We're very pleased with the transition from when it's driving EV (electric vehicle) to when the engine and generator kick in," he said.

GM also is finishing work on the power cord, which will be durable enough that it can survive being run over by the car. The Volt, he said, will have software on board so it can be programmed to begin and end charging during off-peak electrical use hours.

It will be easy for future Volt owners living in rural and



GM President and CEO Fritz Henderson addresses the media at GM's Tech Center in Warren, Mich., during a news conference regarding the Chevy Volt's 230 composite MPG rating Tuesday, Aug. 11. (AP Photo/Gary Malerba)

suburban areas to plug in their cars at night, but even Henderson recognized the challenge urban, apartment dwellers, or those that park their car on the street might have recharging the Volt. There could eventually be charging stations set up by a third-party to meet such a demand, Henderson said.

Chrysler Group, Ford Motor Co. and Daimler AG are all developing plug-ins and electric cars, and Toyota Motor Corp. is working on a plug-in version of its gas-electric hybrid system. Nissan Motor Co. announced last month that it would begin selling an electric vehicle in Japan and the US next year. (AP)

### Vouchers for clunkers plan draws fire

WASHINGTON - Japanese automakers objected Wednesday to a request from lawmakers to change the \$3 billion Cash for Clunkers program to allow consumers to get vouchers even if a car isn't in stock at dealerships.

Toyota Motor Corp. said it opposed the proposal from Republican Reps. Candice Miller and Fred Upton of Michigan, saying it would "create considerable confusion for consumers and dealers that is not warranted."

Honda Motor Co. said it questioned whether changes to the popular Car Allowance Rebate System incentives were needed and the president of a trade group representing Toyota, Honda and 11 other foreign manufacturers said changing the car rebate midstream would create more complications.

"It's another whole level of complexity in a very complex program already," said Mike Stanton, president and chief executive of the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers.

Congress approved a \$2 billion extension to the car rebate program last week, a move that could let consumers take advantage of the vouchers of up to \$4,500 until Labor Day. Through early Wednesday, \$1.32 billion had been spent on the program, leading to the sale of 316,189 new vehicles.

Miller and Upton wrote Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood earlier this week asking that consumers be allowed to receive vouchers from the manufacturers for vehicles that have yet to arrive at dealerships. The current rules require the vehicles to be at dealerships to qualify.

The lawmakers said the clunkers program has led to a scarcity of certain fuel-efficient vehicles, and reduced production levels have made it difficult for car companies to replenish their inventories. "The inventories of some auto makers and dealers have been so depleted that the program's extension may be limited in its effectiveness," Miller and Upton wrote.

The Transportation Department has been reviewing the lawmakers' request. Domestic automakers, meanwhile, have been more open to the potential changes.

Chrysler said in a statement Wednesday that because of declining inventories, "a consumer currently may have to settle for less than their first choice to lock in the benefits of the CARS program." Chrysler said it continues to "look for ways to ensure the consumer can obtain the vehicle of their choice."

General Motors Co. spokesman Greg Martin said, "a voucher idea might be worth a closer look" as vehicle inventory levels dwindle. Ford Motor Co. spokesman Mike Moran said the automaker had worked hard to ensure adequate vehicle supply at dealerships but would support the measure if it would "help consumers get the vehicles they want." (AP)

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