

Spark 'Perfect Urban Car,' Says Chevy's Chris Perry

DETROIT – The Chevrolet Spark, a mini-car currently sold in 100 markets worldwide, will debut in the U.S. later this year with new features specifically targeted to appeal to the urban millennial market.

"We listened to what young people said they wanted in a car. Our engineers tuned and equipped the Chevrolet Spark specifically for first-time buyers and city dwellers in North America," said Chris Perry, vice president of Chevrolet Global Marketing.

"Spark is the perfect urban car because we've made it easy to drive, easy to park and easy to own."

To tackle the challenges of urban driving environments, several Spark features are tailored to North American consumers, including:

- Giving the Spark the ability to conquer steep inclines and declines with Hill Start Assist and equipping the Spark with a sixth sense with Panic Brake Assist – both standard



The 2013 Chevrolet Spark comes standard with Hill Start Assist, which helps drivers of manual transmission-equipped vehicles navigate steep inclines or declines in cities known for their hilly terrain. The Spark also features as standard a Panic Brake Assist for emergencies.

on Spark and new to the mini-car segment in North America.

Hill Start Assist aids drivers in cities known for hilly terrain – such as San Francisco – by holding the vehicle in place while the driver switches from the brake pedal to the gas.

- Panic Brake Assist detects situations where emergency braking is needed and automatically engages maximum braking force.

- Squeezing Spark into the tightest of parking spaces with a length of only 144 inches and 63 inches wide, which is 37 inches shorter and 8 inches narrower than the Chevy Cruze.

- Connecting Spark owners to their friends, music, videos and photos with a radio that features a seven-inch diagonal color touch screen equipped with the Chevrolet MyLink infotainment system, which provides users with access to Pandora and Stitcher, Bluetooth and navigation.

MyLink also makes it possible to connect a smartphone or other USB device to play movies, display pictures and download contacts for hands-free calling, allowing for a full

in-vehicle media experience.

- Packing extra horsepower under the hood with modifications to the engine displacement and enhancements to the ride and handling, giving the Spark more power and better handling at higher speeds.

- Hooking up the Spark with 15-inch wheels, making it the only vehicle in the segment to come standard with alloy wheels and increasing its performance and style street cred.

- Giving the Spark a facelift with a deeper grille and restyled fog lamps for a sportier, more aggressive style.

The Spark will arrive in Chevrolet showrooms later this year.

With an Aging Population, TRW Develops Driver Seat-Belt Aid

LIVONIA – TRW Automotive Holdings Corp. has developed a new active seat belt technology that assists the driver in grasping the belt during the buckling-up process.

The system, known as TRW's active seat belt presenter, can help to support elderly or less mobile passengers, as well as act as a reminder to fasten the seat belt upon entering the vehicle.

Uwe Class, senior engineering manager, global active restraint systems at TRW, commented: "Current systems are today fit into coupes and convertibles where the seat belt is more difficult to reach due to the B pillar being considerably further back than in other vehicles."

"The technology is currently not available for 4- and 5-door vehicles, but this is an area that TRW is exploring."

"Widely available statistics indicate an aging population globally and we believe that comfort functions such as our seat belt presenter are becoming increasingly important for this demographic. And as a safety company, we are proponents of occupants being reminded to buckle up."

TRW's new seat belt presenter is mounted directly on the height adjuster within the vehicle's B pillar. When the occupant is seated, the presenter – a small arm that rests within the B pillar – brings the belt forward to an 'easier-to-reach' position.

As soon as the occupant takes the belt, the arm simply reverts to its original park position. The presenter can be easily integrated into the B pillar with no modifications required other than to the trim.

Class continued: "The seat belt presenter can bring the



TRW's new seat belt system.

belt forward up to 300 mm, depending on the vehicle. We are working closely with individual vehicle manufacturer customers to identify the optimum position for occupants to retrieve the belt and minimize any twisting action required as part of the buckling process."

TRW estimates that its active seat belt presenter will be ready for production by 2016.

TRW is a global leader in automotive safety systems. With 2011 sales of \$16.2 billion, TRW Automotive ranks among the world's leading automotive suppliers.

Headquartered in Livonia, the company, through its subsidiaries, operates in 26 countries and employs more than 60,000 people worldwide.

TRW Automotive products include integrated vehicle control and driver assist systems, braking systems, steering systems, suspension systems, occupant safety systems (seat belts and airbags), electronics, engine components, fastening systems and aftermarket replacement parts and services.

GM Focusing on 'Designs That Make Life Easier'

DETROIT – Getting into the Chevrolet Equinox is so easy, say Chevy officials, its owners may never notice.

The small crossover's narrow rocker panels require minimal reach to step over, and its seat height requires minimal bending, according to Chevrolet officials.

Equinox's ease of entry, they say, is just one example of Chevrolet's use of universal design, an approach that makes products of all kinds work for as many people as possible.

A rear-vision camera, programmable liftgate and easy-to-use touch screen controls are examples of Equinox's ease-of-use features.

Ease of use is increasingly important to car design as automakers adapt to changing consumer demographics. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 65-and-older population is projected to grow to more than 71 million by 2030, and will account for 20 percent of the nation's citizenry.

That means more car buyers will be dealing with age-related issues that affect range of motion, eyesight, hearing, reflexes and cognition – issues that General Motors has studied in depth and has already begun to address in many of its vehicles such as the Equinox.

"We never design vehicles specifically for older consumers, but we increasingly integrate design solutions



Ingress in the Equinox.

that work for all users, regardless of age," said Carl Wellborn, senior staff engineer and project manager, GM Design and Technology Fusion.

"Designs that make life easier for older users also work for younger users. Universal design is the key to unlocking usability solutions and implementing them successfully."

Wellborn presented GM's findings on increasing product value for an aging global market at the American Occupational Therapy Association's national convention last year. The research was based on dozens of interviews with consumers who ranged in age from 21 to 65 and older.

"We are thrilled that GM is interested in better understanding the unique needs of aging drivers," said Elin Schold Davis, project coordinator of the Older Driver Initiative at the American Occupational Therapy Association in Bethesda, Md.

"We are a car-dependent nation and want to maintain our driving independence as



GM Chairman and CEO Dan Akerson receives the International Executive of the Year Award from the Executives' Club of Chicago last week in Illinois. The club cited Akerson's leadership in helping guide GM's recovery in both the U.S. and global markets.

Akerson Named Executive of Year

CHICAGO – Citing his leadership in helping to guide General Motors' recovery and its strength in both U.S. and global markets, the Executives' Club of Chicago last week gave GM Chairman and CEO Dan Akerson its 2012 International Executive of the Year Award.

During a moderated question-and-answer session before nearly 1,000 attendees, Akerson discussed a number of topics, including GM's resurgence; record profits of 2011; global growth in China

and Russia; and his role in recruiting more women to the GM Board of Directors and executive leadership team.

Previous honorees include executives such as Larry Ellison, Bill Gates, the chiefs of United Airlines, IBM, Northern Trust Corp. and others.

The Executives' Club of Chicago was founded in 1911. Its Board of Directors is composed of 46 CEOs and senior executives of top companies headquartered in the Chicago area.



Egress is easier in the Equinox, Chevrolet says.

long as we can. Vehicles that use universal designs can make it easier and safer for people to have and enjoy personal transportation well into old age."

For automakers, the rising number of older car buyers is impossible to ignore, because Baby Boomers, the generation now reaching retirement age, buy the most new vehicles.

According to a recent study from J.D. Power and AARP, people ages 50 and older now buy more than 6 of every 10 new vehicles sold – up 39 percent since 2001.

"Boomers want vehicles that help them maintain their vitality by adapting to their needs, rather than the other way around," said Matt Thornhill, founder and president of the Boomer Project, a marketing research firm in Richmond, Va.

"If a car screams that it was designed 'for old people,' Boomers will hate it and so will younger buyers. Boomers want vehicle designs that reflect their youthful vitality and aspirations, even if they are dealing with age-related issues."

One of the reasons why operating a vehicle becomes more difficult with age is diminished range of motion. Equinox's blind spot mirrors and wraparound rear side glass can be useful to drivers, regardless of their age, who may have difficulty looking over their shoulder when making a lane change.

In addition, the crossover's

rear-vision camera, standard on 2013 Equinox LT and LTZ models, helps all drivers identify objects behind the vehicle when backing up.

Equinox's rear programmable power liftgate, standard on LTZ and available on 2LT, also helps users of any age who have limited range of motion, but also is convenient for anyone whose hands are full.

Another example of Equinox's universal design advantages is its segment-leading, multi-flex rear seat that allows parents to move the rear seat closer for easier and safer access to their children. The additional leg room afforded by the multi-flex rear seat allows up to five people to sit comfortably in the vehicle.

Also in easy reach are Equinox's center stack radio controls, with redundant controls on the steering wheel that help drivers keep their hands on the wheel and eyes on the road.

Additionally, Equinox's MyLink infotainment system, standard on 2013 LT and LTZ models, has a seven-inch color touch screen display with easy-to-understand icons.

The system allows users to integrate their Bluetooth-paired smartphone with their vehicle so they can stow their phone and safely use the hands-free voice control system to listen to music files and place calls to stored contacts. Users also can access their mobile phone book on the display.

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