

Spark Aimed at the 'Digitally Enabled' Youth

by Irena Granaas

The 2013 Chevrolet Spark minicar is designed to appeal to an evolving customer base of younger people who want personal transportation but resist taking on the burdens and expense of owning a car.

For generations, buying a car was a highly anticipated event on the road to young adulthood. But, according to research by Chevrolet and MTV Scratch, today's next-generation urbanites tend to delay this kind of major purchase because of uncertainty about taking on new vehicle ownership expenses.

They also want a car that is cheaper and easier to maintain. The Spark, with its retail starting price of \$12,995 (priced more than \$3,000 less than its nearest competitor, the Scion iQ), is designed to overcome these consumers' objections to car ownerships right out of the gate with a flurry of cost-saving and convenience features.

Annalisa Bluhm, communications manager for Chevrolet small cars, expounded on the identity and characteristics of these next-generation customers.

"It's someone who is between the ages of 16 and 32, or even a little older, but who is very digitally enabled, you know, who lives and dies by their cell phone, but is familiar with posting to social media," she explained.

Bluhm indicated much thought went into this idea of the digitally enabled person and what they need to feel more at home inside a vehicle.

"Because when you shut the door and put the phone down, that really does cause a lot of anxiety for a next-generation customer, so how do we make it safe, interactive and create a familiar environment in which they can engage?"

In answer to that question, Chevrolet offers Spark customers the seven-inch touch screen MyLink infotainment system, which Bluhm said works directly with the user's cell phone to enable the vehicle occupant to use applications, do navigation, watch movies and view photos, for example.

"It even helps to re-text messages safely, so there are a lot of things to help bring that new, next-gen customer mentality to the vehicle," Bluhm commented.

"For a vehicle like the Spark, you really are looking at the ones who understand the constraints and challenges of city driving. These customers want something a little smaller, nimble, to help them get through the commute in a comfortable way, not just for themselves but for up to four passengers."

In another move likely to enhance the Spark's appeal to the "digitally enabled" set, Chevrolet includes OnStar service for six months, giving Spark owners the convenience of receiving monthly vehicle diagnostics, including tire pressure and fluid levels, sent to their email accounts and cell phones.

Savings and convenience for owners continue over the life of the vehicle, Bluhm said. For example, Chevy officials say, the Spark can go up to 100,000 miles before needing new spark plugs, an advantage of 36,000 miles over the Fiat 500 and nearly double that, or 70,000 miles, over the Smart fortwo minicar.

And, according to Chevrolet, the Spark is the only minicar on the market covered by a five-year/100,000-mile Powertrain Limited Warranty; a three-year/36,000-mile bumper-to-bumper limited warranty and a six-year/100,000-mile rust-through limited warranty.

These days, fuel economy is on the minds of many consumers

when making a purchase decision, and the Spark is as frugal as close competitors such as the Scion iQ and Fiat 500 with its 38 mpg highway rating, according to vehicle stats on the Chevrolet.com Web site.

As most car owners know, regular oil changes are essential to keeping engines in good running condition.

Unlike many vehicles whose owners' manual recommends an oil change every 3,000 miles, the Spark can go about 7,500 miles, or more than twice as long between oil changes, a potential savings of about \$900 over the average 150,000 mile life of the car (based on the cost of an oil change with gas saver bundle at participating Chevrolet Certified Service providers).

Engineers have equipped the Spark with other practical features that continue to provide owners with savings, as well as fewer timeouts for maintenance as the years – and miles – roll on. These include transmission and power steering fluids designed to last the life of the vehicle, and an engine timing chain that does not require regular maintenance. In fact, the Spark will tell its owner

when it's time for maintenance, and what is required.

The Spark, which was launched in Korea in 2009, is now available in almost every country. The Chevy minicar's global sales have exceeded 600,000, and U.S. sales are gaining traction following its July 17 debut.

"It's only currently available in 18 cities, so we will be launching the vehicle nationally in the first quarter of next year," said Bluhm.

Detroit is one of the 18 cities in which the car is currently sold, and it's also available in L.A., Chicago and New York market areas.

Chevrolet is slated to debut a new, all-electric version of the Spark called the Spark EV, a plug-in-only version having no internal combustion engine. Initially, Bluhm said, the Spark EV will be available only in California and South Korea.

She said that although the EV lacks the range of a gasoline-powered or a hybrid vehicle, the EV is perfectly suited for short commutes within city limits.

Reveals are scheduled first at the Los Angeles Auto Show in a few weeks. The car will also be unveiled at the Detroit International Auto Show in January.



The Chevy Spark drives through Grosse Pointe in July.

Ford, U-M Hold Contest to Connect Vehicle to Vehicle

Ford Motor Co. and the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) are offering undergraduate college students a chance to contribute to the future of Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) communications.

Students will have the opportunity to innovate for safety and sustainability using vehicle communications technology that allows vehicles to talk to each other wirelessly. The competition is hosted by UMTRI.

"The competition encourages the development of new mobile applications on the connected vehicle platform that we hope will generate creative thinking about how to grow the potential for V2V technologies in the future," said Paul Mascarenas, chief technology officer at Ford and its vice president of research and innovation.

"This research is pivotal to the delivery of the next generation of Ford driver assistance technologies and will globally benefit Ford customers, other road users and the environment."

By participating in field trials of connected vehicles in the U.S. and around Europe, by internal research and by activities such as the University of Michigan student competition, Ford, according to company officials, is developing new applications and features that will allow future customers to drive more safely and have better information to reduce their travel times and their fuel consumption.

"While connected technology has been fundamentally aimed at safety, it presents a platform for many other applications from mobility to the environment; from emissions and energy efficiency to the economy," said Peter Sweatman, director of UMTRI.

"We are confident that the greatest innovation will come from students who have essentially grown up using technology. They see connected technology and automatically think how it can be used to make the greatest impact. This is a chance for them to be part of the future of transportation."

The competition runs concurrently with Safety Pilot Model Deployment, the \$25-million pilot that establishes a real world test site in Ann Arbor to study wireless communications among vehicles and roadside equipment for use in developing future safety measures and technologies.

Nearly 3,000 vehicles will participate in the test, which will evaluate this technology in real-world conditions. Ford has fully equipped eight Taurus SHO vehi-

cles with integrated V2V and data acquisition systems for this year-long test. Automotive supplier Denso is also providing support for the competition.

Multidisciplinary teams of students are challenged to advance dedicated short-range communications (DSRC) through the development of new and innovative applications that benefit road users in the areas of safety, mobility and sustainability.

The teams are not limited to personal cars or trucks. Rather, they are encouraged to include the full spectrum of road users, including commercial vehicles, transit buses, motorcycles, bicycles and pedestrians.

Backgrounds in electrical, mechanical and computer engineering are important, but interdis-

ciplinary teams will be required to develop holistic applications.

The winning team's project must be innovative, operate reliably and effectively during judging, and be user-oriented to have a strong potential for making a positive impact or modulating user behavior.

Teams will be provided access to UMTRI's V2V lab for the duration of the project, as well as UMTRI and industry research mentors. Two two-way DSRC devices, including antennas and cabling, will be supplied to each team, as will protocol and installation documentation for the devices.

Idea submissions are due Dec. 1. Ford will participate in the judging for the competition, with the award announcements in late April.

Ford C-MAX Hybrid Outsell Toyota Prius in October

The new Ford C-MAX Hybrid is now the best-selling hybrid utility vehicle, according to Ford, after outselling Toyota Prius v, 3,182 units to 2,769 units, in its first full month of sales in October.

The new C-MAX Hybrid, which Ford claims is America's "most fuel-efficient and affordable hybrid utility vehicle," led Ford in achieving its best October hybrid sales month ever with a total of 4,612 sales, up 142 percent over October 2011.

C-MAX Hybrid sales helped Ford deliver its best October for small car sales in 11 years. Ford sales of Focus, C-MAX and Fiesta were up 54 percent to 25,493 units year over year.

"The new C-MAX is off to a fast start in the heart of the hybrid market, not only outselling Prius v, but drawing a lot of interested Toyota customers who chose our

new hybrid instead," said C.J. O'Donnell, manager, Ford Electrified Vehicles.

"Customers now come into our showrooms for fuel economy, and we're delivering with six vehicles that offer 40 mpg or better, including the new C-MAX Hybrid at 47 mpg combined, with another two on the way by year's end."

C-MAX Hybrid's leading EPA-rated fuel economy – up to 7 mpg better than Prius v, says Ford – is already helping attract new customers in key coastal markets that own import vehicles. One in four C-MAX Hybrids sold in October were sold in California, with Los Angeles as the best-selling region and San Francisco following in second.

Additionally, initial conquest data show that more than 70 percent of C-MAX Hybrid buyers traded in a competitive model or

added it without trading in another vehicle. And one-third of C-MAX Hybrid customers in October said they cross-shopped the Toyota Prius and Prius v.

"The C-MAX Hybrid is winning over customers with its best-in-class passenger room, smart technologies and leading fuel economy," said O'Donnell.

"And its \$25,995 price tag gives customers the value they are looking for without having to make the typical compromises that have defined most hybrids until now."

Customers are demonstrating that even in a hybrid vehicle, they are looking for "real car" features.

More than 60 percent of sales of C-MAX Hybrid are the SEL model, which offers Intelligent Access with push-button start, rain-sensing wipers, heated

Ford Earns Honor For Its Attorneys' Pro Bono Work

Corporate Pro Bono recently honored Ford Motor Company with its CPBO Partner award in recognition of the Dearborn-based automaker's pro bono partnerships to serve the needs of the local community.

CPBO, a partnership project of the Pro Bono Institute (PBI) and the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC), praised the high level of volunteer participation in the pro bono work among Ford's attorneys.

"The fact that more than 40 percent of the lawyers in Ford Motor Company's Office of the General Counsel participated in the clinics speaks volumes to Ford's dedication and level of commitment," said Veta T. Richardson, president and CEO of the Association of Corporate Counsel.

"Ford's leadership and service to the community sets a high standard for all organizations. Most importantly, Ford's program demonstrates that good corporate citizenship is possible even during times of economic downturns."

"At Ford, we have a strategic goal to provide opportunities for our attorneys to perform meaningful pro bono service," said David Leitch, general counsel and group vice president of Ford Motor Company. "It's important to support the communities in which we build and sell vehicles. This award recognizes the hard work of our Ford team and builds the momentum for our pro bono work for 2013."

This is the first time Ford has received the CPBO Partner Award for their pro bono work.

Ford Pro Bono partner programs include:

- The Food Stamp Clinic, which was developed with Ford and the Legal Aid and Defender Association, Inc. (LAD), was designed to identify families and individuals who are either eligible to receive food stamps and are currently not receiving them, or are not receiving the amount to which they are entitled. With Ford's help, the clinic has assisted hundreds of people and has helped identify tens of thousands of dollars in benefits.

- Nonprofit Survival Series Clinics, developed by Ford, Dykema Gossett PLLC and Michigan Community Resources (MCR) to help ensure local nonprofits continue to have the capacity to serve their constituents.

At these clinics, Ford attorneys help community-based nonprofits identify legal issues that threaten their viability and ability to operate.

At the beginning of each clinic, Dykema attorneys work with Ford attorneys to train the Ford volunteers on issues faced by nonprofits.

seats, SYNC with MyFord Touch, ambient lighting and the Reverse Sensing System standard.

Early sales of the SEL model are running about 20 percent higher than expected, Ford officials say.

Ford's first production plug-in hybrid C-MAX Energi – America's most fuel-efficient and affordable plug-in hybrid vehicle, Ford says – is now available at Ford EV-certified dealers in half the states across the country.

As Ford's first production plug-in hybrid, Ford officials say C-MAX Energi provides customers with an all-new electrified vehicle offering that delivers a class-leading 108 MPGe city EPA rating, "real car" horsepower of 195 (versus Prius plug-in's 134 horsepower) and a leading EV-only speed of 85 mph, 20 mph above the Prius plug-in.