Ford To Offer Tiny 3-Cylinder Engine In U.S.

The Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. will bring a tiny gas-stingy engine to the U.S. from Europe next year, challenging the fuel economy of current hybrid cars, a company official said Thursday.

The one-liter, three-cylinder turbocharged engine will be an option on at least one of the company's small cars, Joseph Bakaj, the company's vice president of powertrain engineering, said in an interview.

About half the size of the motor in the Focus now sold in the U.S., the engine could put pressure on hybrid and electric car sales because it competes with them on mileage but comes with a far lower price tag. Ford would not say how much the new engine would cost when it becomes available next summer.

Ford sells two small cars in the U.S., the Focus compact and the Fiesta subcompact. Bakaj wouldn't say which car would get the tiny motor, nor would he estimate how many miles it will be able to travel on a gallon of gas.

Mileage in U.S. testing is likely to be lower because driving habits are different, including higher use of air conditioning which cuts into U.S. mileage.

The motor will put out about 125 horsepower, five horsepower more than the current 1.6-liter engine in the U.S. Fiesta.

Called "EcoBoost," the engine is now sold in the European version of the Focus, in which it gets the equivalent of 49 miles per U.S. gallon in combined city and highway driving.

The top-mileage U.S. Focus gets an estimated 33 mpg in combined city and highway driving with a two-liter, four-cylinder engine. Generally, engines with fewer cylinders burn less fuel.

Bakaj said the 1-liter engine will get better mileage than the current Focus engine but fall short of Toyota's Prius c gas-electric hybrid. The Prius c, a compact car, gets an estimated 50 mpg in combined city and highway driving. Hybrid cars are powered by both gasoline and electric motors, and their batteries are recharged by capturing energy when the driver brakes.

The one-liter engine is the quietest motor now offered in a European Focus, Bakaj said, and it accelerates quickly because of the turbocharger.

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