GM Rolls Out New Electric Mini-Car

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DETROIT (AP) -- General Motors is giving its Chevrolet Spark a jolt of electricity.

An all-electric version of the mini-car will debut this week at the Los Angeles Auto Show. It goes on sale this summer in California, Oregon, Canada and South Korea, where it's made. Other markets will follow.

Unlike the Chevrolet Volt sedan, which can run in all-electric mode but also has a backup gas engine, the Spark EV is a pure electric. GM won't say how far the car will go on a charge, but says it will be a top performer among the small number of EVs available. The current leader, the electric Ford Focus sedan, can go 76 miles on a charge.

The Spark EV will also be cheaper than most of its electric rivals, GM says. Exact pricing hasn't been revealed, but the car will start for less than $25,000 in the U.S. when a $7,500 federal tax credit is factored in. The electric Nissan Leaf starts at $27,700 with the tax credit. Like all electrics, though, the Spark is much pricier than its gasoline-powered equivalent. The gas-operated Spark starts at $12,245.

Here are more details about the Spark — on everything from styling to power:

UNDER THE HOOD: The Spark EV is powered by an electric motor and a 20 kWh lithium ion battery. It gets 130 horsepower and can go from zero to 60 mph in less than 8 seconds, which is several seconds faster than the gas-powered Spark. GM says the Spark EV is the first all-electric vehicle in North America to offer SAE Combo DC Fast Charge capability, which can charge the battery to 80 percent of capacity in about 20 minutes. It can also be fully recharged in seven hours using a standard 240-volt outlet, or longer using a 120-volt outlet.

INSIDE: Though it's a mini-car, it has lots of big-car touches, like leather seats and GM's OnStar safety system. The Spark EV will have a smartphone-based infotainment system that gives drivers access to navigation and music apps like Pandora. Drivers with a compatible iPhone can link up their phones and perform tasks — like sending email or texts — by talking to Apple's Siri. The car also has 10 air bags and electronic stability control, which helps keep it steady despite its small frame.

OUTSIDE: The five-door hatchback is tiny, at 144.7 inches long. That's about five inches longer than a Fiat 500. It comes in lime green and other unusual hues.

CHEERS: GM customers will now have an all-electric option that costs less than its chief rivals. The EV could also increase buyers' interest in the gasoline version of the Spark, which went on sale in the summer.

JEERS: Demand for electric cars has been anemic so far. GM and other automakers have fallen significantly short of EV sales targets, especially as gas prices have fallen. Electrics remain expensive, and drivers are concerned about getting stranded too far from a charging station. While the Spark is great for city drivers who need to fit into tight parking spaces, those drivers may not have garages or other spots to charge up their cars at night.

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