

Subaru Unveils Its First Hybrid

Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Subaru is coming out with a gas-electric hybrid crossover SUV for the crunchy granola crowd that wants to save fuel but still haul kayaks to the river.

The Japanese brand, which specializes in all-wheel-drive vehicles, unveils the 2014 XV Crosstrek Hybrid on Thursday at the New York International Auto Show.

The company's first gas-electric hybrid gets somewhat better gas mileage than the conventional Crosstrek and has stop-start technology that shuts down the engine at red lights to save fuel. It has all-wheel-drive capability and the same 8.7-inch (22-centimeter) ground clearance so it can go on trails.

Subaru also will unveil a concept WRX high-horsepower compact car that strongly hints at what the next generation pocket-rocket will look like. The company says this WRX is lower, sleeker and wider with a bigger grille, while it keeps the classic hood scoop with clearance for a new turbocharged engine and air cooler. Subaru didn't say when the new WRX would hit showrooms or give further details.

Here are the highlights of the XV Crosstrek Hybrid:

UNDER THE HOOD: A 2-liter Boxer engine with 148 horsepower, plus a 13.4 horsepower electric motor and a continuously variable transmission that keeps the engine revving in an optimal range for gas mileage and power. The 13.5 kilowatt nickel-metal-hydride battery is under the rear floor, while the electric motor is under the hood just behind the transmission. The hybrid version weighs about 300 pounds (136 kilograms) more than the gas version. The electric motor starts the car under light acceleration and starts the gas engine once the car is moving. The car can run on electricity alone in low-speed situations.

OUTSIDE: The gas-electric model has hybrid badges on the front edges of the front doors and tailgate and different wheels and tail lamps. Also has a new green pearl exterior color exclusive to the hybrid. The front grille shutter system cuts wind drag at highway speeds.

INSIDE: Passenger cabin is slightly smaller (0.7 cubic feet), as is the cargo space of the hatchback. It's about 2 cubic feet (0.06 cubic meters) less at just over 50 cubic feet (1.42 cubic meters). Hybrid instrument cluster with a blue color scheme, and blue-and-silver interior.

GAS MILEAGE: Subaru expects 28 miles per gallon (8.4 liters per 100 kms) in the city and 34 mpg (6.9 liters per 100 kms) on the highway. That's three miles per gallon better in the city than the gas version with an automatic transmission, but only one mpg better on the highway.

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PRICE: Will be announced closer to the car's arrival at dealerships in the fall of this year.

CHEERS: Subaru has come up with a hybrid system that can still handle the rigors of going off the road.

JEERS: The hybrid system will come with an added price, but it doesn't get that much better mileage than the gasoline version.

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