



## VW finally gets on the bus

Word has reached our ears that the on-again/off-again journey of a new minivan designed and built by **Volkswagen** is very much on the front burner and will likely launch sometime in 2017. However it appears that the only version in the works will have an electric motor to power the front wheels and its battery pack beneath the floor with a range in miles in the low 300s. Although earlier prototypes had the people mover resembling Vee-Dub's rear-engine Microbus of old, the partial images that we have viewed would suggest a more modern design. Ultimately, any news that deflects from the automaker's diesel scandal is likely welcomed by VW and its anxious dealers.



**ON VACATION WITH FORD.** The Blue Oval sees a bustling camper business that it now wants a part off. And why not, since it has the best-selling pickup to tow it or mount it on.

## Take a Ford fishing

We see this move by the Blue Oval automaker as a logical extension of its brand. Ford is teaming up with Indiana-based recreational vehicle maker Thor Livin' Lite to produce a line of aluminum-bodied travel trailers and bed-mounted campers in conjunction with its all-new 2015 F-150 pickup.

You're looking for a connection? Lightness. Ford brags that the F-150's aluminum body shaves 700 lbs. off the weight, and that Thor Livin' Lite's aluminum campers are 30 percent lighter than the competition. A match made in Weight Watchers.

Eventually the line will extend to include fifth-wheel and pop-up models. Given the fact that Ford dominates the light- and medium-duty pickup markets, it really is the perfect licensing tie-in.

Ford will also have a say in what goes inside these units so that they reflect the style and finishings of the better-equipped Lariat and King Ranch trucks. The first of these trailers and campers are expected to launch in the coming months.

## Saab saga continues

We hear that **National Electric Vehicle Sweden**, the company that acquired the assets to **Saab** (but is working on the rights to use the name) and is now owned by a China-based consortium, is planning to roll out four different electric vehicles based on the same platform. The models include three different types of sport utility vehicles plus a four-door fastback body style. The new vehicles are supposed to roll off the automaker's existing production line in Sweden sometime in 2018, or about a year following the return of an all-electric 9-3 sedan. Although initial sales will be limited to Europe and Asia, NEVS states that its goal is to eventually bring back the Saab brand to North America.



Saab 9-3



2016 Porsche Cayman

## Porsche plays the name-change game

These peach-colored pages hear that, beginning with the 2017 model-year, both the **Boxster roadster** and **Cayman hatchback coupe** will be rebadged the 718 Boxster and 718 Cayman.

Concurrent with this nomenclature adjustment, both models will drop their non-turbo six-cylinder engines for a pair of turbocharged four-cylinder powerplants. Base models are rumored to receive 2.0-liter units that will produce 240 horsepower, while "S" variants will displace 2.5 liters and generate 300 horsepower and or 370 horses in the GTS.

And in case you were wondering, the 718 designation originates from racing Porsches from 1958-'60 that clobbered the competition in road races all over Europe and North America.



2016 Porsche Boxster

### TEST DRIVE

## 2016 Nissan Sentra

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and an 8-speaker, Bose premium audio system. The Premium package can also be added to SR cars for \$2,590 (the difference in price reflecting additional equipment for SV which is standard on SL). The Technology package (\$1,230) includes intelligent cruise control, forward emergency braking and NissanConnect services.

Newly standard for 2016 (on SV/SR/SL) is Siri Eyes Free, which allows hand's free voice connection to make/receive calls, read/send texts and emails, select music and request directions from a compatible device. For Sentra buyers, this should be news they can use, as Nissan's research shows that about half are iPhone owners.

S trim levels are the only Sentra's to offer a manual transmission: the S 6MT base model gets a six-speed stick. Nissan's Xtronic Continuously Variable Transmission is optional on S models (\$850) and standard elsewhere in the lineup. CVT's by their nature linger at the speed that most efficiently puts power to pave-

ment. At certain rpm's, this can lead to a droning effect that some find unpleasant. Nissan's CVT has been reprogrammed to electronically simulate shift points, which noticeably tamps down on the effect.

Stick or CVT, the transmission connects to Nissan's 1.8L four-cylinder engine. It's listed at 130 horsepower @ 6,000 rpm and 128 lb. ft. of torque @ 3,600 rpm, and has three driver-selectable modes (Normal, Eco and Sport). Fuel economy for all CVT-equipped models is estimated at 29 city/38 highway. That compares with 29/38 for Corolla and 31/41 for Civic.

With model specific features (CVT, underbody aerodynamics, low rolling resistance tires), the Sentra FE+S model rates a frugal, 30/40. The 6-speed manual version checks in with 27/36. Corolla's four has adequate power for all around driving, but passing takes planning. It's loud when you step on it, but as noted, the newly programmed CVT makes things quieter than they used to be.



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this vehicle at these preferred dealership:

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518-579-2000 [www.lianissanschenectady.com](http://www.lianissanschenectady.com)

**LIA NISSAN OF SARATOGA** 2906 Rt. 9, Ballston Spa, NY 12020  
800-639-8663 [www.lianissansaratoga.com](http://www.lianissansaratoga.com)

**LISA NISSAN OF GLENS FALLS** 373 Dix Ave, Queensbury, NY 12804  
518-681-3800 [www.lianissangf.com](http://www.lianissangf.com)



Furthering the cause of cabin calm are a new, acoustic windshield, retuned engine mounts and upgraded sound insulation for dash, door and floor. Torsional rigidity is increased 23 percent, and both front struts and rear shocks have been retuned. New Continental tires have a higher grip compound, and increased sidewall stiffness. The results are a Sentra that rides smoothly and is easy to maneuver.

Sentra sales have nearly doubled since the seventh generation appeared three years ago. With newly available technol-

ogy and added refinements, the latest edition seems poised to keep the ball rolling for Nissan.

The value pick for those of us in the northeast is an SV, with Driver's Assist and All Weather Packages. So spec'd, Sentra is nicely equipped for \$21,705, including destination charges.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 165 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews online anytime at [Timesunion.com/vehiclereviews](http://Timesunion.com/vehiclereviews).