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Power trio

Will three-cylinder engines become the norm?

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Jeep wrangles the weight off.

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TEST DRIVE

More Range, Less Worries

2017 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

Chrysler — maker of the first minivan — follow up on the launch of its latest, with the segment's first hybrid. The newest Pacifica model sports a fuel frugal personality, offering an estimated 30 miles of all-electric range, and 530 miles of total range.

The appeal of electric-only vehicles is tempered by concern about how far you can travel before recharging. It's enough of a thing that it's spawned its own name — Range Anxiety.

Plug-in models like Pacifica Hybrid cut the cord on such worries, because they remove the worst case consequence. With the batteries fully charged and a tank full of petrol, the system takes over the details. You run almost exclusively on electric power for about 30 miles. When the charge is depleted, the hybrid system



2017 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid

MSRP: \$ 41,995-\$ 44,995*

(*\$34,495-\$37,495, with available \$7,500 federal tax credit.) (\$1,095 delivery charge)

switches to the V-6 gas powered engine, and you're good for roughly 500 miles more, before you recharge, or refill.

The number 30 is significant, because Chrysler's research shows that most families drive less than 30 miles per day. The finding is similar to Toyota's, who, at the launch of the new Prius Prime recently, said that 50 percent of Americans can get to work and back (which they defined as 25 miles) on one electric charge. So, industry data suggests that a lot of folks could potentially do a day's worth of driving without touching the gas supply. The gas-plus-electric approach of plug-in hybrids like Pacifica offer a high tech, belt and suspenders approach to powering your vehicle. Just stow (your range anxiety) and go (wherever you want).

The powertrain pairs a 3.6L V-6 gas engine with a dual motor, eFlite electrically variable transmission (EVT). The engine is modified with an Atkinson cycle combustion system. Both of the EVT's electric motors are capable of driving the minivan's wheels, thanks to a one-way clutch design. Total system horsepower is 260. Regenerative braking helps provide additional



Chrysler's newest minivan is the hybrid version of the Pacifica, which replaced the Town & Country. It offers a 30-mile range on a single charge of its 16-kW battery pack, while a 3.6L V-6 gas engine extends the overall range to 530 miles.

electric range, by converting kinetic energy to electricity, and charging the 16-kW battery pack. Using the supplied, level 1 charger with 25-foot cord and standard (110v) household current, the battery pack can be fully juiced in about 14 hours. Those who want or need a quicker boost can buy an optional, 240v charger (or use commercial/public 240v charging stations), which will replenish the battery pack in about 2 hours. Top speed in electric-only mode is 75 mph (above that, the gas engine chimes in). In either mode, there's sufficient power under foot to handle any normal driving requirements. The cutover from electric to gas is seamless. The only giveaway of the switchover is

the replacement of the golf cart quiet of the electric motor with the (modest) engine noise of the gas powered engine. Pacifica has road-trip worthy ride comfort. Handling is stable and confident, though not sporty.

THE Pacifica Hybrid's MSRP places it right in the segment's sweet spot.

Dash displays provide hybrid-specific information to the driver. The 8.4-inch touchscreen that accesses the Uconnect infotainment system has pages of information on power flow, charging schedules and driving history. The programmable, 7-inch cluster display also includes a charging/power gauge and an "efficiency coach," to encourage efficient driving.

Else-wise inside, the hybrid is largely the same as the standard model. Decades of design experience with

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