

Sonata to follow Elantra GT

These peach-colored pages were blown away by the recently revealed (and significantly updated) **Hyundai Elantra GT** hatchback that goes on sale later this year. We also hear that a new **Sonata** sedan that will follow the hatch into production in 2018 will actually share some of the Elantra GT's design cues. That includes the redesigned nosepiece, sheetmetal creases and both turbo-charged and non-turbo four-cylinder engines that make as much



A redesigned Sonata sedan will take its style from this new Elantra GT.

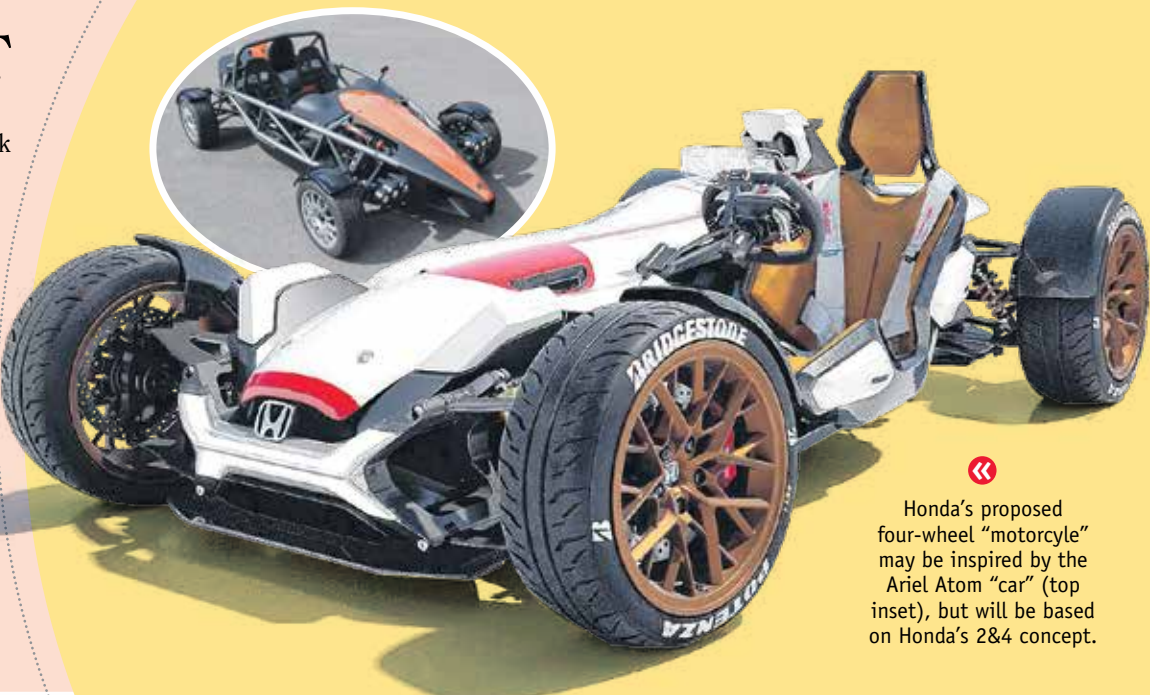
as 245 horsepower. Interestingly, the max output pales when compared to other mid-size sedans (note the Honda Accord's 278-horse V-6). The always-active rumor mill is suggesting that a new high-output four-cylinder developed by Hyundai's N performance shop could be part of a sporty Sonata option package.



Chrysler's Portal concept may be the next big thing in (self-driving) minivans.

Chrysler's Portal to the future: The next big thing in minivans?

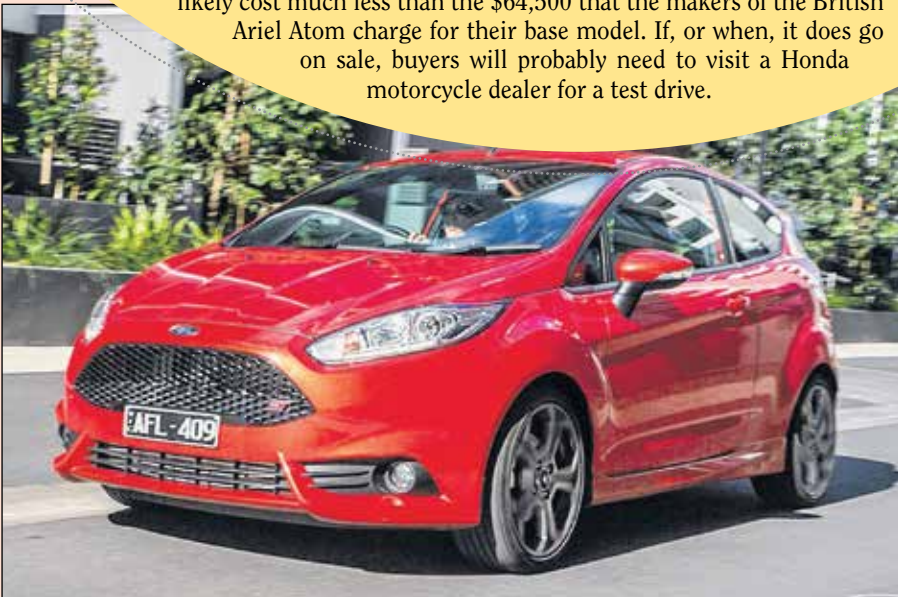
Our sources hear that the futuristic minivan concept Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) unveiled last January at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas could be headed for production by the end of this decade or early in the next. The **Chrysler Portal** is an all-electric, six-passenger lightweight van that can be adapted for commercial use by removing the second- and third-row seats. Equipped with a 100-kilowatt-hour lithium-ion battery, the Portal has a claimed range of up to 250 miles on a single charge. Forgetting the commercial part and zeroing in on all the tech goodies, these peach-colored pages are seeing what Chrysler thinks is positioning as the next evolutionary step of the minivan. No small prediction, since Chrysler invented the segment in 1983 with the Dodge Caravan (and Plymouth Voyager). Eco-conscious young parents not only have a desire to remain connected in transit, they also require modular functionalit in seating. Did we mention Chrysler is also pitching this as the first self-driving mini-van? Hey, we never had that option when the kids were little.



Honda's proposed four-wheel "motorcycle" may be inspired by the Ariel Atom "car" (top inset), but will be based on Honda's 2&4 concept.

Honda's four-wheel motorcycle?

That's what our sources are reporting. Apparently inspired by the open-top **Ariel Atom** that uses various Honda-made turbocharged four-cylinder engines, the Japan-based automaker has filed patents for a similar, but smaller cycle-style machine. That model will apparently be based on Honda's **2015 2&4 concept** (itself seemingly based on Honda's 1960s RA272 Formula One), an 893 lb. vehicle powered by 212 horsepower 1.0-liter V-4. Instead of that engine, however, the new vehicle will use an all-electric powerplant and will bump its weight up to 900 lbs. The 2&4's minimal "dashbaord" and floating seat design made little provisions for safety, so we'll have to see what form the new single- or dual-seat street-legal vehicle takes. Either way, it will likely cost much less than the \$64,500 that the makers of the British Ariel Atom charge for their base model. If, or when, it does go on sale, buyers will probably need to visit a Honda motorcycle dealer for a test drive.



The new Fiesta ST will keep its distinctly Ford exterior styling, but get a 1.5-liter Ecoboost three-cylinder engine that will make the hot hatchback faster than the previous model.

Fiesta ST goes three cylinder

Ford made its commitment to three-cylinder engines official by debuting its smallest performance model's new powerplant at last week's Geneva Auto Show. The next-generation **Fiesta ST hot hatchback** will ship next year with a turbo-charged 197-horsepower 1.5-liter three-cylinder engine that replaces the current turbo 1.6-liter four-cylinder (both make 197 horsepower). The new, smaller power-plant will also have cylinder deactivation that reduces piston operation to two from three under light-load conditions, and three selectable driving modes. As for performance, Ford claims the ST will hit 60 mph from rest in 6.7 seconds, which makes it slightly quicker than the current car. Drivers will also be able to defeat the traction and stability control aids for added track-time fun. Expect an early 2018 launch.

TEST DRIVE

2017 Nissan Titan

Continued from page 3

loth upholstery (unless you opt for leather, part of the \$3,520 Convenience package). Trail related gear in the Pro-4X starts with all-terrain tires with a more rugged tread profile, skid plates, front tow hooks, a two speed transfer case, hill descent control, front air dam delete and Bilstein shock absorbers with an off-road tune. The shocks offer improved capability for serious trail work, but at the cost of a stiffer, more jittery ride over less-than-perfect roads. Unless you plan on spending significant time off pavement, I wouldn't recommend the Pro-4X trim for this reason. The coil sprung Ram 1500 is arguably the best riding of the current crop of ½ tons. And while even non-Bilstein equipped Titans don't figure to match it (particularly with a light load in the box), the ride quality of any trim level other than Pro-4X will suit the majority of Titan buyers

better than the off-road minded Pro-4X. You ride tall in the saddle in the Pro-4X 4x4. Depending on your length of leg, you may want to consider the running boards (standard on SL and Platinum) to ease the in's and out's. Once seated, I found two visibility aids worth considering. The rear view mirrors on my test truck (part of the \$1,820 Utility and Tow Package) are multi-functional. The power/folding/heated/extendable mirrors have wide, concave strips at their base and are fitted with puddle lamps. They also house the lights for the blind spot monitoring system (standard on Pro-4X and up), and collectively do a lot to fill you in on what's behind/alongside you. This is particularly handy when towing, but if you don't plan on doing so, they're oversized and may be overkill. Regardless of mirror choice, the Around View monitor with moving object detection (std. on Platinum, optional on



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

LIA NISSAN 2233 Central Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304
518-579-2000 www.lianissanschenectady.com

LIA NISSAN OF SARATOGA 2906 Route 9 Malta, NY 12020
518-633-1133 www.lianissansaratoga.com

LIA NISSAN OF GLENS FALLS 373 Dix Ave., Queensbury, NY 12804
518-681-3800 www.lianissangf.com



Pro-4X) is really useful. The 360-degree, bird's-eye view allows you to back this big truck into tight spots with infinitely less rubber-necking and guesswork than trying the same move without it. Titan's dashboard has a low key design. Controls are a blend of conventional and touchscreen based; fairly straight forward in operation. The back seat holds adults comfortably, with the option of lockable, under-seat storage, or fold up seats with a flat load floor.

Crew Cabs have a 5½ foot bed, King Cabs will measure 6½ feet, and the Single Cabs get the long (8-foot) box. Available extras include LED under rail cargo box lighting, a cargo rail system with movable, tie-down cleats, in-bed storage bins and a bed access step.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.

Don't miss next week's Test Drive: **2017 Chevy Trax**