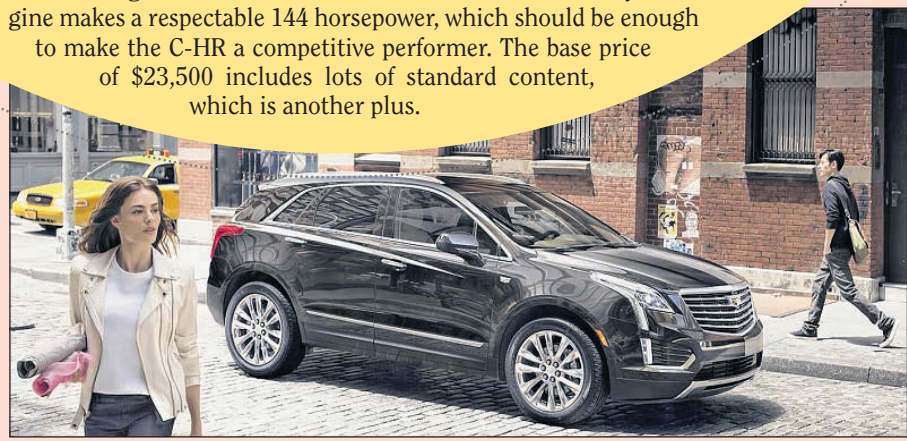




Toyota's C-HR isn't exactly a gap-filler between the Corolla and the RAV4, which is what the brand needs.

## Where does the CH-R fit?

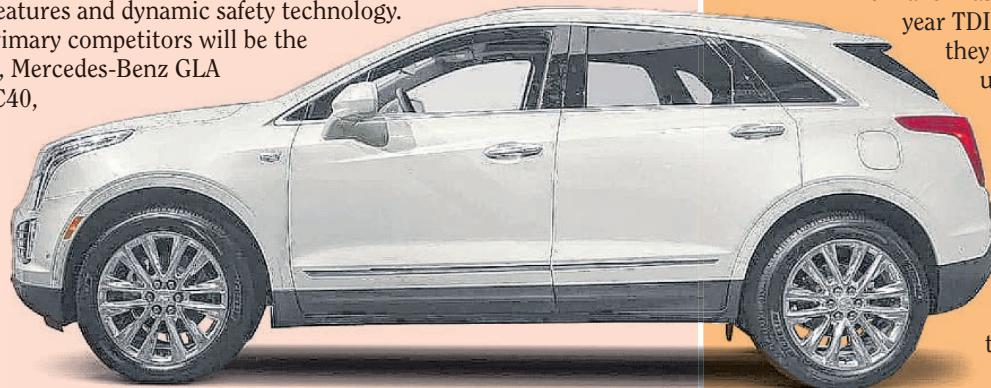
We've had a good look at what was to be the next Scion model, but with the brand's 2016 demise, the new **CH-R wagon** has been moved to the **Toyota** lineup. As such, it's not exactly a submodel to the RAV4, which is really what Toyota needs. The C-HR's looks are an odd assortment of creases and squiggles that one auto reviewer described as "astounding." Nevertheless, the little wagon should draw in a younger audience, or those who find the Nissan Juke, Kia Soul and Jeep Renegade too conservative for their liking. Since both of those choices can be had with all-wheel-drive, it's surprising that the CH-R will only come with front-wheel-drive. Another shocker is that neither a navigation system or a power-operated sunroof are on the option sheet. The good news is that the standard 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine makes a respectable 144 horsepower, which should be enough to make the C-HR a competitive performer. The base price of \$23,500 includes lots of standard content, which is another plus.



## Next Cadillac takes a shortcut

The success of the size-large Buick Encore hasn't gone unnoticed by another General Motors division. Reports from the Motor City have it that Cadillac is hatching what will be called the **XT4** that's due out for the 2018 model year. The wagon will be a stepped-down from the current **XT5** and will share that model's square-ish appearance. A turbocharged four-cylinder engine connected to an eight-speed automatic transmission is the likely power source. All-wheel-drive will head the list of options, as will numerous luxury features and dynamic safety technology. Apparently the XT4's primary competitors will be the BMW X1, Lincoln MKC, Mercedes-Benz GLA and upcoming Volvo XC40, indicating that a mid-\$30,000 base price is likely.

A new XT4 will be smaller than the XT5 (right), although they'll have similar shapes.



## GM's on the legal hook

The U.S. Supreme Court decided this week that **General Motors**'s 2009 bankruptcy restructuring does not protect it from legal claims stemming from its deadly **ignition-switch defect**. That flaw, which GM ignored for years, has been linked to at least 124 deaths, 275 injuries and the subsequent recall of 2.59 million vehicles. Plaintiff's lawyers have estimated claims against the automaker could reach as high as \$10 billion. The faulty switch — which could turn off the engine during driving, thus deactivating the airbags — was used in small cars such as the Chevrolet Cobalt and Saturn Ion.



2011 Volkswagen Jetta TDI diesel: It's being purchased back by its maker.

## The (VW) fix is in

You may be used to buying cars from automakers, but a lot of people are now in the position of having their cars bought by the company that made them.

Those people would be **Volkswagen** owners, specifically those who purchased a diesel-powered **VW Jetta** and **Passat TDI**. You know, one of the models the German maker got caught installing software to help the car cheat on emissions tests. As a result of the legal fall out, VW agreed to buy back at least 85 percent of the 475,000 TDIs it has sold in the U.S. since its scam was uncovered, at a cash payout starting at \$5,000. From 2009 to 2015, VW installed the cheating software in some 11 million vehicles worldwide, including 500,000 in the U.S. So, yeah. That adds up.

In a recent letter to the U.S. judge overseeing the settlement, VW said it has now bought back nearly 238,000 TDIs, and fixed the issue on 6,200 of them. (Vehicles with the 1.6L diesel will need a software fix and a new fuel injector installed; those with the 1.2 and 2.0 engines require only a software fix.)

The maker has gained government approval to sell used 2015 model-year TDIs, but some earlier models cannot be sold because they have no approved fix. What becomes of these cars is unknown.

As an aside, the buyback has created a cottage industry of "TDI hoarders" who are now buying up used TDIs in the hopes of selling them back to VW at a profit. Jalopnik.com reported on one such entrepreneur who bought 10 used TDIs and expects to make a 55 percent return on investment, pocketing \$60,000 in profit. In one instance, he purchased a 2011 Jetta TDI for \$7,900, and is set to sell it back to VW for \$15,300. And they say crime doesn't pay. Or, in this case, other people's crimes.

### TEST DRIVE

## 2017 Toyota Corolla iM

Continued from page 3

chassis is an upgrade over the Corolla sedan. And the option sheet offers a TRD lowered spring kit (\$399). But those seeking to press the sporting aspect will find that there are no engine options and, ultimately, power is the ceiling on the car's performance factor, not handling.

However, the progressive platform and small footprint make for a fun, frugal runabout hatch — which is what it was designed to be — not a sports car. The Corolla iM rides comfortably, even with the standard, 17-inch rims and tires. Visibility in the iM is generally good to the front and sides. Less so in back, where the rear roofline and smallish backlight conspire to create ¾-rear blind spots. No blind spot monitoring system is offered,

so drivers must mind their mirrors. The switch to Toyota brings with it the addition of Safety Sense as standard equipment on the Corolla iM. TSS-C includes lane departure alert, automatic high beams and a pre-collision system. While all safety enhancements are welcome, I'd like to see blind spot monitoring added to the package. Lane departure alert can be worth its weight in gold when the driver is over-tired, but help with seeing what's lurking in spots you can't see alongside is news you can use every time you drive your car, whatever kind of car you're driving.

One reason why hatchbacks are handy is that they frequently offer more cargo capacity than similarly sized sedans. That's true here. The iM's cargo capac-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER



ity aft of the rear seats is 20.8 cubic feet, which is 7.8 cu.-ft. larger than the Corolla sedan's trunk, and more than the Mazda3 hatch, but less than Focus, Golf or Civic hatchbacks. The iM's rear seatbacks fold forward to a mostly level load floor for larger items. Front leg room measures 41.6 inches, which is slightly below average for the comparison group we're using. I'm 6-foot-one, and I wouldn't say no to an extra inch or two, but it's a relative measure, so take a seat and see how it sizes up for you. The iM's rear seat legroom measurement (32.7 inches) lags the listed comparable models. Full extension of the front seats makes for a tight squeeze behind for tall passengers.

The interior features a fresh looking design and a straight forward layout of controls. The front seats are quite com-

fortable and controls are in easy reach. The level of standard equipment is high for the segment, with the roster including: a 7-inch touchscreen display, AM/FM/HD/Aha head unit with six speakers, USB/auxiliary ports, voice recognition and Bluetooth wireless technology, remote keyless entry, automatic headlights, power windows and door locks, automatic dual-zone climate control, heated, power folding rear view mirrors and a leather-trimmed, tilt and telescoping steering wheel. The fact that you don't have to dig into your pocket for features that are optional elsewhere gives the Corolla hatch a value feel.

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.