

## Honda gains new Insight

A **Honda** executive recently revealed that the automaker remains committed to sedan production, despite buyer appetite for utility vehicles. The comment was made during a recent press launch of the **Clarity** sedan that's available as a plug-in hybrid throughout North America, with additional battery and a hydrogen-powered iterations available in certain U.S. states. Now there's word that Honda will reintroduce the **Insight hybrid**



2019 Honda Insight prototype

hatchback that was cancelled after 2014. This time, it will be a sedan and share platforms with the current Civic.

The Insight will use a new two-motor hybrid power system that will also be available in a new CR-V hybrid utility vehicle. Both vehicles are expected to launch for the 2019 model year.



Ford dusted off the Shelby name for its high performance variants in 2005. This is a 2014 model.

## Shelby GT500 comeback?

It has been four years since **Mustang** buyers could opt for this powerhouse Mustang, but Ford says the wait will soon be over. The forthcoming super snake is now in the final testing phase and will arrive sometime in 2018 as a 2019 model. The previous **GT500** was fitted with a supercharged 5.8-liter V-8 that made 662 horsepower and 631 pound-feet of torque. The next-gen model will run with a smaller 5.2-liter V-8 (also supercharged), with a manufacturer-claimed output of more than 700 horsepower.

A six-speed manual transmission will return, but a seven-speed paddle-shift gearbox originally developed for the ultra-expensive Ford GT sports car will be optional. Massive Brembo-brand brakes will be part of the GT500 package, as will fender-filling 20-inch wheels. There's no official word on pricing, but we believe that \$70,000 should cover it



Shown here at the recent Detroit Auto Show, GAC's GS8 sport utility might be the first Chinese-branded car to hit the U.S. market.

## Coming to America: Two new auto brands

As if the automotive landscape isn't competitive enough these days, it will get even more crowded with the arrival of **GAC Motor** of China and France-based **Peugeot**.

Also known as Guangzhou Automobile Group Co., GAC attended the recent 2018 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Mich., its fourth time at the annual event. This time it showed three current models plus a concept. GAC claims it will begin selling its vehicles here by the fourth quarter of 2019. Although China is currently the largest auto-buying market in the world, aside from some Chinese-built Volvos and Buicks and Cadillacs, its own vehicles haven't made it to these shores. J.D. Power's Initial Quality study has ranked GAC the top-scoring Chinese automaker for the past five years.

GAC's lineup ranges from small sedans up to the large seven-seat GS8 sport ute, which is likely to be its first model on sale here. Company reps haven't said, however, whether they'll be setting up their own dealer network or partnering with an established automaker.

On the other side of the globe, the PSA Group (a.k.a. Peugeot) isn't exactly new — it sold cars here until 1991 — but it's taking a longer-term approach. It plans to reenter the market under the the Germany-based Opel brand, which it acquired (along with U.K.-based Vauxhall) from General Motors last year for \$2.3 billion.

As with GAC, PSA isn't saying how it intends to sell Opel vehicles here, though previous Opels were sold through Buick networks.



## Gas tax hike on tap?

President Donald Trump hinted last Wednesday that a 25 cent increase in gas and diesel taxes might be required to help pay for his new infrastructure plan, according to a Democratic lawmaker present during the bipartisan White House meeting.

Speaking with reporters, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao (wife of Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell) confirmed that Trump "has not declared anything out of bounds, so everything is on the table," but admitted raising the tax was "not ideal." The federal gas tax has not been raised since 1993.

Paying for the promised \$1 trillion infrastructure improvement plan has been up in the air. Trump has also suggested an increase in user fees on roads, highways and bridges, and the current plan calls for pushing much of its funding to individual states.

### TEST DRIVE

## 2018 Subaru Legacy

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All-wheel-drive is Legacy's strongest asset in this segment, as few of its competitors even offer it, and none make it standard equipment across the board. Subaru's system uses a transfer clutch to actively monitor/control power distribution between wheels, in response to driving and road conditions.

The power transfer is continuously variable, and electronically managed. You can, of course, get around with rear or front wheel drive in snow and slush, but it's noticeably less difficult with AWD. And the worse the conditions, the most noticeable the difference is.

Smartphone users will appreciate that Legacy's system is now compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. It's

part of an upgrade in Subaru's Starlink multimedia system. The standard center screen is slightly larger (6.5-inches vs. 6.2-inches), as is the optional screen (now 8-inches, formerly 7).

The larger display is appreciated for ease of viewing, though its placement (flush with the dash and angled slightly) leaves it susceptible to screen washout occasionally in strong sun. The upgrade system includes a variety of infotainment options (AM/FM/CD, Sirius XM and Travel Link, Bluetooth, Aha, Pandora, Starlink) with touchscreen and voice controls.

The Eyesight Driver Assist Technology Package content varies according to trim. In this vehicle, the package included adaptive cruise control, automatic pre-collision braking, lane departure and



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

**GOLDSTEIN SUBARU OF COLONIE**  
1754 Central Ave., Colonie, NY 12205  
518-869-1250 [www.goldsteinsubaru.com](http://www.goldsteinsubaru.com)

sway warning with lane keep assist, blind spot detection with rear cross traffic alert, lane change assist, reverse automatic braking and high beam assist. Regarding the latter, automated high beam switching systems have been around at least since the 1950s.

While the latest versions are infinitely more reliable and useful, they aren't as much fun to look at as the laser like, dash top devices that were found in Fifties cars.

The midsize Legacy holds adults comfortably in both rows of seats.

Though not the biggest in its segment, the trunk's 15 cubic-foot capacity is good sized, with a sectioned tray below deck (above the spare tire), for hidden storage, and 60/40 split, folding rear seatbacks, to allow for long items. Also here is a center pass-through, suitable for skis, pool cues or similar long and skinny items.

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: **2018 Infiniti QX30**

