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TEST DRIVE

First Drive: 2019 Volvo XC40

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

While the SUV label conjures up visions of woodsy trails and rural settings, Volvo sees their new, XC40 as a city dweller; more at home prowling urban canyons than tackling rocky roads.

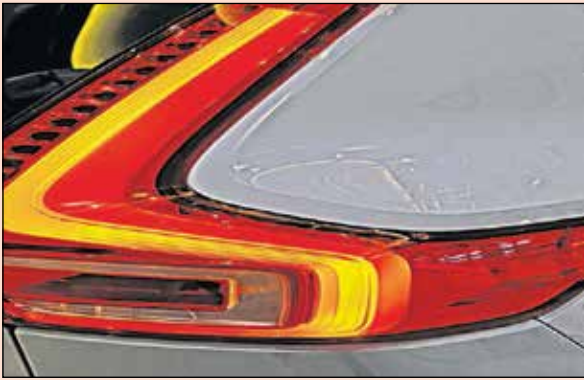
Volvo's newest SUV is also its smallest SUV. The XC40 will compete in the subcompact, premium SUV market; a segment it shares with the Audi Q3, BMW X1 and Mercedes-Benz GLA, among others. This is the first Volvo to be built on the company's Compact Modular Architecture. All future 40 series models will roll on this scalable platform — including fully electrified vehicles.

When XC40s begin arriving in dealer showrooms at the end of this month, the first wave will be equipped with all-wheel-drive, and powered by Volvo's T5 four-cylinder engine. As the year progresses, the model line

2019 Volvo XC40
MSRP: \$33,200 - \$37,700
(plus \$995 destination charge)

will be fleshed out with a top Inscription trim joining the current Momentum and R-Design levels. This summer, front-wheel-drive models will be added in the same three trims. All will share a different (T4) version of Volvo's 2.0L turbo four.

The XC40 has compact, chiseled lines, framed by signature head and taillight treatments. It's a handsome design (not easy to do, in small cars) that should appeal to both genders (not easy to do — period). The Volvo's tight turning radius and compact footprint are



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THE VOLVO XC40 is the Swedish maker's smallest SUV. The premium subcompact begins arriving in showrooms at the end of the month with all-wheel-drive and a four-cylinder engine. Turbo and front-wheel-drive will be added later.

prerequisites for metropolitan motoring. Sightlines are generally good, with the sole exception of ¾ rear blind spots typical of SUVs/crossovers. Blind spot monitoring is available optionally (and as always, recommended).

Beyond this, the XC40's list of available safety technology is unique in two regards. The diversity of standard and optional safety gear mirrors its larger Volvo line mates, and that menu is broader reaching than others in this segment. Volvo's Collision Mitigation with Braking, for example, extends to include intersections, pedestrians, cyclists, and large animals. These are staples of everyday life in urban environments, and the collision protection coverage offered by competitive models isn't as extensive.

Similarly, Volvo's cross traffic alert and rear collision warning systems also include automatic braking — an ex-

tra layer of safety not otherwise available in this segment.

The route of my Texas test drive included generous helpings of rain, big city congestion, highway traffic and enough open country to clear one's head after dealing with the former conditions. The T5 engine is a turbocharged, 2.0-liter, inline four-cylinder with direct injection, rated at 248 horsepower @ 5,500 rpm and 258 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,800-4,800 rpm. Paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission, it's a nice match for this platform — provided that you get out of the

Comfort zone. That's the Drive mode's Comfort zone — not yours. Left in the default, Comfort setting, powertrain response felt sluggish. I found that the Dynamic mode is the wake-up call. While such sport modes are often hyper aggressive, Dynamic in this Volvo makes for

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An intriguing element about Volvo's latest addition is a new, non-ownership option.



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