

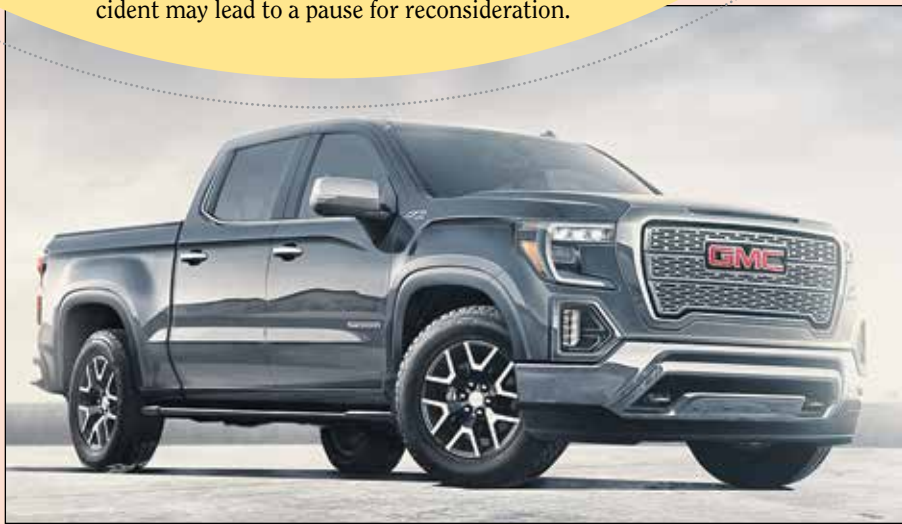
This Uber self-driving Volvo XC90 is the same model as the one involved in a recent traffic fatality.



Fatal autonomous fail?

A fatal accident in which a self-driving **Uber** SUV hit and killed a pedestrian is causing many to question continued testing of autonomous vehicles. The incident occurred 10 p.m. on March 18 in Tempe, Arizona, when a 49-year-old **pedestrian was struck and killed** by the self-driving Volvo XC90. A monitoring back-up driver was present in the front seat, but appears in a video to have not been paying attention when the vehicle, operating in full autonomous mode at 39 mph, failed to slow down for the pedestrian, who was pushing her bicycle across the road.

Experts are now questioning both Uber's safety protocols and its Lidar technology, a laser-based system that should detect objects, even in total darkness. Also coming under scrutiny are some of the shortcuts that have been taken in implementing self-driving technology. In the push to be the first to fully deploy autonomous transportation, Uber especially has cut many corners. In some cases, it's even violated the law, using its bogus Grayball app to deceive law enforcement and flouting a ban on self-driving cars in San Francisco. In fact, after tussling with California after its vehicles were found running red lights, Uber was lured to use Arizona as a testing ground after that state agreed to waive regulations. While declining to comment on the March 18 incident, Uber has now temporarily suspended testing. One of the selling points of autonomous transportation is that, by taking human error out of the equation, it would make the roads safer. This last incident may lead to a pause for reconsideration.



The new 2019 GMC Sierra is actually larger than the 2018 model, requiring some consideration for bed access. It will feature the new MultiPro tailgate, with an assist handle and a new flip-down step built into the edge of the tailgate.

GMC Sierra: totally new for '19

Following the announcement of an all-new Chevrolet Silverado, General Motors' **GMC Sierra pickup** will receive similar treatment, but with a more distinctive appearance and features to distance it from its sibling. Chief among them is an optional carbon-fiber cargo bed that's claimed to be lighter and sturdier than Ford's highly touted aluminum construction, and eliminates the need for a spray-on or insert-type liner.



Buyers can also opt for the MultiPro tailgate (left) that has a full-width step and also an assist handle for easier entry to the cargo box. The MultiPro has six different functions, including "load stop" barrier that flips up to keep cargo from sliding out when the tailgate is lowered. With no physical tailgate handle, the operation is controlled by two buttons on either side of the rear camera lens.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Subaru XV Crosstrek

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Crosstrek's 2.0-liter, "boxer" four-cylinder adds four horsepower for 2018 (now 148) and torque output remains at 145 lb. ft. EPA fuel economy estimates are 23 mpg's city, 29 mpg's highway, 25 mpg's combined (manual); 27/33/29 automatic. It accelerates easily off the line, and cruises comfortably at highway speeds.

However, as with any small displacement engine, absent the added oomph of a turbocharger, it feels underpowered in high demand situations (passing, merging). This is likely a low nine-second car from 0-60 mph. The stick shift returns slightly less mpg's than does the CVT, but if you're inclined to shift it yourself,

there are several advantages here. First and foremost, it's a nice stick setup, with a positive feel going from gear to gear. A hill holder feature allows the driver to release the brake while releasing the clutch on an incline, without rollback. Manuals help to wring the most out of modest size engines. You can dip into a lower gear when you need to, and hold it as long as you want to.

Finally, staying with the stick saves you a grand, which would put a nice dent in one of the option packages. Crosstrek is rated to tow a modest (1,500 lb.) trailer. That bests all of our quartet of comparables except Renegade (2,000 lb.), though the act of towing wouldn't figure



North American International Auto Show changes in store?

Sources claim that there are major changes coming for the annual Detroit, Mich.-based event, including a possible move to October from the current January show period. This would likely be agreeable to the thousands of worldwide journalists who endure Detroit's winter to attend the NAIAS. A date set during a warmer part of the year would also allow exhibitors (that is, car manufacturers) to host outdoor product demonstrations, something that has rarely happened in the past. The NAIAS has experienced a drop in manufacturer participation in recent years, and increased competition from the annual CES (Consumer Electronics Show) event in warmer Las Vegas, Nev., just before the NAIAS, is attracting a growing list of automotive exhibitors.



Is Detroit where anyone wants to be in January?



Classic dune buggies inspired this 2017 Volkswagen Beetle Dune edition with 18-inch Canyon wheels. It may soon be over for the iconic Beetle, though.

VW to squash the Beetle

After the current iteration of the legendary Beetle runs its production course, Volkswagen plans to let the iconic vehicle lapse from its lineup.

During last month's Geneva Motor Show, Frank Welsch, head of R&D for the German automaker, told Autocar that "two or three generations is enough now."

Welsch stated that VW's new T-Roc Convertible will eventually replace not only the Beetle, but the Golf and Eos cabriolet models by 2020. Further, VW envisions that by then, its "heritage" vehicle will be the I.D. Buzz — basically an electric-powered version of the classic Minibus.



Volkswagen I.D. Buzz: Look familiar?

Volkswagen's T-Roc convertible concept



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to improve your 0-60 time.

Despite riding on a raised suspension, Crosstrek maintains a car-like feel on the road. It's an agile handler, by crossover standards, aided by Vehicle Dynamics Control and Active Torque Vectoring. With an independent suspension and a longer wheelbase than its peers, it's also possessor of a smooth ride.

All-wheel-drive is standard on all

Crosstrek models. The on-demand system (and 8.7-inches of ground clearance) make the Crosstrek up to the task for light off-roading or any Capital District winter weather woes.

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.