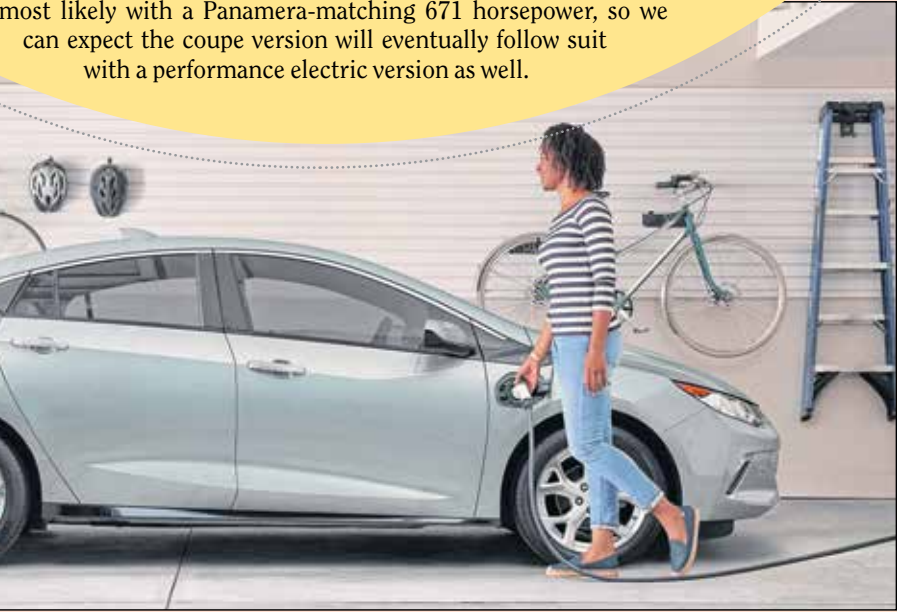




This Porsche Cayenne crossover may be losing two of its doors for a coupe version.

Porsche will make a Cayenne coupe

Many luxury-vehicle makers have already created fastback versions of their utility vehicles — starting with the BMW X6 years ago, and followed by the Mercedes-Benz GLE — so why should **Porsche** be left out? Since spies have spotted such a prototype vehicle already, it’s a virtual certainty that Porsche will introduce a four-door “coupe” version of the popular **Cayenne** utility vehicle. The new model, which is expected to launch sometime in 2019 as a 2020 model, will look just like a tall wagon from the front, but behind the rear doors a giant hatch will change the vehicle’s character from staid to sporty, with a unique roof-mounted spoiler in back. There’s no definitive word as to powertrains, but it’s likely that the Cayenne’s current engine lineup will carry over. Porsche has confirmed it plans to give the Cayenne a turbo S E-Hybrid option, most likely with a Panamera-matching 671 horsepower, so we can expect the coupe version will eventually follow suit with a performance electric version as well.



Recharging your Chevrolet Volt’s battery may soon be done in half the current time.

Reduced charge time for Volt

There’s been much progress made lately by a number of automakers on increasing range and reducing charging times for electric vehicles, including the **Chevrolet Volt**. The compact plug-in hybrid has an electric-drive system is assisted by a gasoline-engine generator that helps maintain battery charge.

For 2019, Chevy is promising a reduction in the Volt’s charging times when the car is connected to a 240-volt Level II system (most public charging stations). The new 7.2-kilowatt system, according to Chevrolet, will mean a recharging time of 2.3 hours, which is about half the time required for the 2018 Volt.

The faster technology will be optional for the base Volt LT (which has the slower 3.6-kilowatt system), but will come standard on the Premier trim level.

Return of the Honda Insight

The Honda Insight was one of the original hybrids, but it bowed out after the 2014 model year. It was thrifty enough, but was ultimately overwhelmed by Toyota’s highly successful Prius. Resuscitated for its third generation, the 2019 Insight is based on the Honda Civic sedan, although a mild front and rear redesign has yielded a more attractive shape. The car’s hybrid power-plant produces a net 151 horsepower, which is enough to create decent acceleration along with an estimated 52 miles per gallon for combined city/highway driving. That number matches the similarly priced Prius’s number, but from a fun-to-drive perspective the Insight goes straight to the head of the class. Pricing begins at \$23,700, including destination charges.



The new Honda Insight leaves the previous model on the dust.



The Courier was Ford’s compact truck from 1971-85. Could it be coming back?

A smaller truck for Ford?

Ford bowed to popular demand in bringing its smaller Ranger pickup truck back for a 2019 model, but it might soon be bowing even lower.

Reports suggest that the company is weighing the option of introducing an even smaller pickup in 2020 that would slot below the Ranger.

Evidently, the compact model would ride on the next-generation Focus platform, and fill the global market void left when the Brazilian-made, Fiesta-based subcompact **Courier** was replaced by the mid-sized Ranger in 2013.

The Courier name was once used on a Mazda B-series compact pickup sold in the U.S. market by Ford in the 1970s and ’80s. Though any new U.S. model might not bear the Courier badge, it’s worth noting that Ford has registered that name with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.



This Brazilian-made Courier might be the basis for a new, smaller truck from Ford.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Audi A4 Sedan 2.0T

Continued from page

If cargo carrying is a big part of your driving life and you’re shopping the A4, consider also the A4 Allroad wagon.

The Ultra version of the 2.0 turbo four (curiously named, as it’s the detuned version of the engine) is rated at 190 horsepower and 236 lb.-ft. of torque. It’s the more mileage-minded of the motor choices, and EPA says you can expect 27 city/37 highway /31 combined.

Sensible doesn’t mean slow, though. Audi claims a 0-60 time of 7.3 seconds. That’s reasonably quick for typical transport. But, part of the luxury car experience is the luxury of abundant power at your disposal — even if you don’t use it.

Seen through that prism, the upcharge engine has the responsive feel that most people would expect in a car of this class. The 2.0L generates 252 horsepower and 273 lb.-ft. of torque. That’s 62 more horses than Ultra, (and +32, compared to the previous generation A4 motor), as well as 37 additional lb.-ft. (+15, versus

the outgoing engine). It takes about 5.6 seconds to get to 60 mph, and Audi says that’s about the same regardless of transmission choice. Fuel economy is predictably predicted to be lower than the Ultra. However, the EPA numbers (24/34/27 (auto), 24/33/27 (manual)) are still very respectable.

I’ve not yet had the opportunity to drive the A4/six-speed manual combination. The S tronic seven-speed automatic fitted in my test car is a dual clutch transmission. That design preloads the gear above and below the one you’re in, so when you reach for the paddle shifters, the next gear arrives instantly, making manumatic shifting more enjoyable. And, when left to its own devices, automatic shifts are generally smooth, though it’s possible to catch the transmission (briefly) napping when switching quickly from deceleration to acceleration, or when taking off briskly from a stop.

Audi’s quattro AWD system is a good one, paying dividends in all seasons. The



The 2018 Audi A4 Sedan 2.0T’s handsome, updated cabin comes with upgraded technology, including the Navigation and Telematics package and MMI Navigation. The virtual cockpit and upgraded main display screen are versatile and visually impressive.

full-time system typically apportions the power 40 percent/60 percent, front/rear, but can channel as much as 85 percent to the back wheels when needed. The added traction is especially rewarding when coupled with the lower center of gravity of a car.

Overall, the A4’s standard suspension tuning and steering feel lean slightly towards the sporty side of normal for luxury sedans. So equipped, the A4 is comfortably agile — a balance point that should suit most buyers just fine. There are several suspension upgrades for those wishing to improve handling capability. One example is the Sport suspension, part of the \$750 Sport package (along with more supportive front bucket seats and a black headliner).

As fitted in my test car, this is a stiffer

setup, and even in the softest setting (Comfort mode), it exhibits some impact harshness. The bottom line here is that you can make the A4 as sticky as you want to (or push all your chips in, and go straight to the S4 sport sedan). Doing so, however, brings with it a giveback in ride quality.

My suggestion is to drive the standard suspension first, include some choppy pavement (never hard to find around here) and be honest with yourself on how much corner carving you’ll be doing — and how much ride smoothness you’re willing to part with.

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.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER