



Volkswagen ID Neo

VW's first all-electric model is due for 2020

The Germany-based automaker has been showing a lot of concept-car flash in recent years, but now it appears that a production model is close at hand. The **Volkswagen ID Neo** (its working title) was recently spotted in what appears to be close-to-final form, but wearing the usual camouflage covering. The small hatchback is roughly the same shape as the Volkswagen Golf, but a size or two larger. The ID Neo uses the same platform that will be the basis of other electrics, including a small sporty hatchback called the **ID Crozz** that's expected to hit showrooms for 2021, followed by the minivan-like **ID Buzz** that will arrive about a year later.

The **Stelvio Quadrifoglio** is one of the fastest SUVs, and Alfa Romeo will be adding a smaller crossover to its lineup.



Alfa Romeo adds a crossover

Intel indicates that an upcoming new model from the Italy-based division of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles will be based on the same platform as the **Jeep Compass**. However, we'd never expect a maker like Alfa Romeo to use that model's modest-output powerplant. Instead, the new Alfa compact sport ute will run with something much more substantial (250-plus horsepower would be a reasonable guess). A plug-in hybrid powertrain that's currently being developed by the automaker will also likely be an option. This new crossover will presumably slot below Alfa's midsize **Stelvio** SUV, whose 510-hp **Quadrifoglio** model staked its claim as the world's fastest production SUV at German's famed Nürburgring track. With an ambitious desire to increase its presence in the North American market, however, Alfa Romeo — known for its luxury performance cars such as the **Giulia** sedan and **4C Spider** sportster — is looking to expand its product range. It appears that, in the next year or two, that's going to happen.



Waymo has a fleet of these autonomously-equipped Chrysler Pacifica minivans. But not everyone is eager to have them tested in their communities.

Attacks on driverless vans

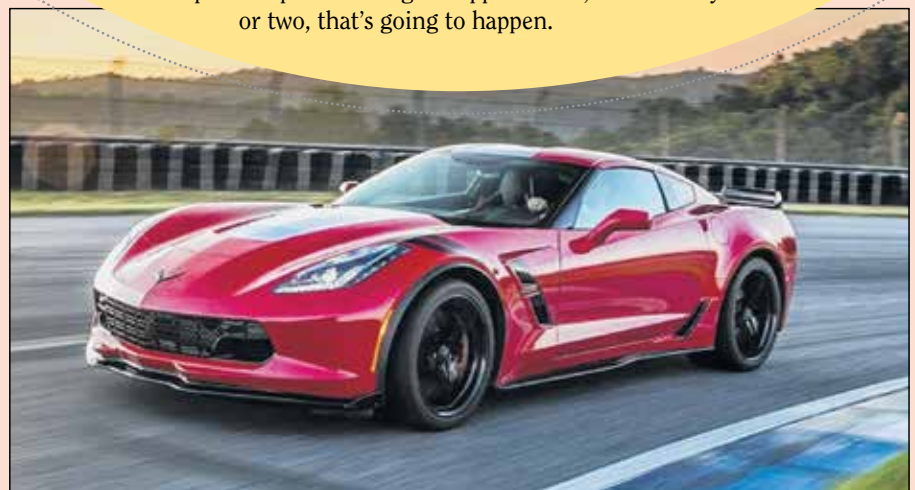
A few weeks ago, we reported on **Waymo** unveiling its autonomous taxi service in and around **Phoenix, Arizona**. In the last year, we've also reported on attacks by anti-autonomous citizens of San Francisco on self-driving vehicles being tested in that city, currently home to more techies than hippies.

Now it appears that some residents of suburban Chandler, Arizona — a state-approved testing location for the Google subsidiary's vehicles — are just as irate about having driver-less vehicles unleashed on their roads.

It seems that, in the last two years, there have been nearly two dozen attacks on autonomous Waymo vehicles (mostly **Chrysler Pacifica** hybrid minivans) including throwing objects at them, slashing their tires and attempting to run them off the road. The human backup drivers in the vans have also been threatened. In one incident caught on video last August, a man even brandished a handgun at a Waymo driver, which resulted in criminal charges.

According to *New York Times* interviews with Chandler residents, the concern is safety. In March of last year, an Uber self-driving Volvo XC90 SUV struck and killed a bicyclist in Tempe, Arizona. There was also a non-fatal accident involving a Waymo vehicle in its hometown of Mountainview, California.

The *Times* article, printed last Monday, quoted one Chandler resident claiming his 10-year-old son was nearly hit in their cul-de-sac by a Waymo van.



The 2018 C7 Corvette was a great value. Will the mid-engine C8 be much more expensive?

Word on the new Corvette's price

We've already reported that the upcoming mid-engine **C8 Corvette** won't be revealed at the 2019 Detroit Auto Show in Detroit, which opens this January 14. Instead, Chevrolet will stage a separate event this summer. The company might, however, show images of the production model earlier than that.

Though there's been excitement over the prospect of a mid-engine model, others have been concerned the move might price the venerable sports car beyond some people's wallets, the last generation Corvette offering a pretty good bang-for-buck ratio.

It appears, however, that the base price will reportedly be about \$5,000 more than the current C7 Vette that lists for \$57,000, including destination charges.

For that extra amount, the C8 will also make a bit more power than the 6.2-liter V-8's current 460 horses. That engine will eventually give way to a double-overhead-cam V-8 in both non-turbo and turbocharged formats. A hybrid powertrain is apparently also in the cards.

TEST DRIVE

2019 Corolla Hatchback XSE

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When Scion — the youth oriented, brand within a brand — was disbanded in 2016, three models migrated into the mainstream, Toyota lineup. The previous version of the Corolla Hatchback was originally known as the Scion iM. Dimensionally speaking, the new Corolla Hatchback is slightly lower, wider and shorter than the car it replaces. With its small footprint and modern platform, the Corolla feels agile and fits easily in tight quarters. It is as it's designed to be: A fun, frugal small car, and ride quality is good for its size. Adding more power and a stiffer suspension could result in a seriously sporty little hatch. Should Toyota wish to expand the lineup, the potential is there.

Visibility in the Corolla Hatchback is generally good to the front and sides,

with typical sized, ¾ rear blind spots. Whereas the former Scion transplant had no blind spot monitoring, the 2019 edition does. Sometimes. Which is to say, it's optional on base, SE trim cars with a CVT (part of the \$1,400 Preferred Package), standard on top, XSE trim cars with a CVT, and unavailable on manual transmission models, regardless of trim. New additions to Safety Sense (TSS) — Toyota's standard, safety technology bundle — include Lane Tracing Assist (CVT cars only) and Road Sign Assist. The expanding list of no cost tech is welcome, but making an important safety feature like blind spot monitoring unavailable to stick shift drivers is regrettable.

Maximum cargo capacity is 18 cubic feet, with the rear seatbacks folded; down from 20 cu. ft. in the outgoing model. Said seatbacks fold to a pretty flat load



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floor, so it's usable stowage space, though you may have to push the front seats forward, so the rear can clear. Leg room in the back seat is 29.9 inches, down from the former 32.7 inches. Tall front-row passengers will effectively erase the available rear leg room, limiting them to kids or cargo use.

The front cabin is noticeably jazzier than the previous hatch, and offers a sneak peek at the upcoming, next-gen Corolla Sedan. XSE models have an upscale look, with heated, leather/fabric front seats (eight-way power adjustable for the driver), and special stitching on the soft touch materials, covering parts of the dash and door panels.

The dash layout is notable for its style and simplicity. A programmable 7-inch display screen is framed by the steering wheel, while an 8-inch touchscreen atop the center stack is the main access point for infotainment features.

The system is now compatible with Apple CarPlay and Amazon Alexa, though still not with Android Auto. HVAC functions are easy to reach (just below the touchscreen), and easy to use (a pair of dials separating a row of physical buttons).

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.