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Fuel misers

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TEST DRIVE

Elbow Room

2019 Hyundai Kona Ultimate AWD

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Special to the Times Union

A foot of fresh snow provided the perfect opportunity to test the all-wheel-drive of this week's test car, the Hyundai Kona.

The on-demand system also has a full-time setting, which splits the power 50/50, front/rear. Invoked via push button, and available only at speeds under 19 mph, it's useful for slugging your way out of particularly low traction situations. Like, you know, getting out of your driveway when there's a foot of snow on top of you.

The fixed torque split pulled the car easily out of the drift surrounding it, and once under way, the on-demand mode took over, transferring power front/rear as needed, to provide the best grip. The ease with which this is accomplished is why AWD is so popular in regions like ours, where Old Man Winter comes to visit whenever he feels like it, and doesn't mind wearing out his welcome.

AWD is a \$1,400 option on the Hyundai Kona. It's

2019 Hyundai Kona Ultimate AWD

Base MSRP: \$ 19,990 (SE);

As tested: \$30,005 (Ultimate AWD); Destination: \$980

available on all trim levels of the subcompact crossover, which prices out as follows (all priced FWD): SE (MSRP: \$19,990), SEL (\$21,800), Limited (\$25,500) and Ultimate (\$27,500).

My test car was an Ultimate, and as the name implies, there aren't a lot of options left to add to the top trim level. Aside from the AWD upcharge, it's pretty much dealer-installed accessories (floor mats, cargo bay cover, etc.). Including the \$980 delivery charge and a set of said mats, my car had an as delivered price of \$30,005.

The test Kona came wrapped in Lime Twist, one of two decidedly bright choices mixed into the car's color charts. Especially on smaller cars and those targeting younger buyers, I'm always surprised that we don't see more bold hues offered.

Kona's profile view shows a four-door hatchback, with dark gray fender/bumper surrounds lending a Sport Ute vibe. The back end is a short, rounded hatch, with very little overhang over the rear wheels. The face features a sharply creased hood, sloping down to a prominent grill. It's flanked by a set of Clint Eastwood Squint headlights (think High Plains Drifter) — a look



THE KONA is Hyundai's still relatively new subcompact crossover. The four-door hatch is available in four trims, including the top level Ultimate, which is all-wheel-drive. Other front-wheel-drive trim levels include AWD as an option.

that's recently found favor with many car designers. Being a subcompact, there's not a lot here, size-wise. At 164 inches long and 70.9 inches wide, it's 4.3 inches shorter (and 1.3 inches wider) than the similarly styled Mazda CX-3, a veteran of this segment and one of its more diminutive members.

Kona arrived last year, elbowing its way into the ever growing crowd of subcompact crossovers. The new Hyundai returns for 2019 with three newly-standard driver safety features: Forward Collision-avoidance Assistance, Lane Keeping Assist and Driver Attention Warning. Any additions to onboard safety gear are to the good. Arguably the two most used driver safety features (Blind Spot Collision Warning and Rear Cross Traffic Warning) are standard on SEL, Limited and UL-

imate, but not available on base SE models. Another useful tool (Parking Distance Warning) is standard on Limited, not offered elsewhere.

Under the hood, Kona tells a tale of two engines. SE and SEL trims get a 2.0L four-cylinder, rated at 147 horsepower @ 6,200 rpm and 132 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,500 rpm. Limited and Ultimate employ a 1.6L turbocharged four, making 175 horsepower @5,500 rpm, and 195 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,500-4,500 rpm. The 2.0 is linked to a six-speed automatic transmission, while the 1.6 is paired with a seven-speed, dual clutch transmission.

As found in my Ultimate tester, the turbo four is a lively motor. Vocal, too. It's always within earshot, to a greater or lesser extent, though it's never out and out

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The turbo four sported by Kona's Ultimate trim is a lively motor.

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