



The Mercedes-Benz SLC roadster goes out in style

The 2020 model year will be the last for the two-seater Mercedes-Benz SLC. The roadster spent 23 years in continuous production as the automaker's junior companion to the SL that originally arrived for the 1997 model year (the name was changed to SLC from SLK for 2017). The retractable-hardtop roadster will be available with special trim packages, paint schemes, a sport suspension, AMG-inspired styling cues and "Final Edition" badging. That package will be available on both the SLC300 and the performance-oriented Mercedes-AMG SLC43.



Removable top, doors for Bronco

The much-anticipated **2020 Ford Bronco** will return to the affordable off-road SUV segment, just in time to try and wrestle dominance away from the Jeep Wrangler. Word is that the resuscitated Ford model will head an eventual line of Broncos, including two- and four-door versions, a front-drive "baby Bronco" and (look out Jeep Gladiator) a small unibody pickup. A two-door Bronco prototype was shown off last month at an event for dealers in Palm Beach, Florida. In the spirit of competition for the Wrangler, the doors and hard top will be removable. Customized options will allow these items to be stored in the cargo hold, while the A-pillar mounted mirrors will remain in place when the doors are removed. Styling will take its cues from the boxy Broncos of the 1960s, with signature Ford bold grille. It will share a platform with the next-gen Ranger, and be built alongside that mid-size pickup at Ford's Michigan plant. It's likely the Bronco will get its power from the F-150's 2.7L EcoBoost V6 (325 h.p. and 380 lb-ft of torque), and a 2.3L turbocharged four may also be an option. The Bronco should go on sale in 2020, with a mid-\$30,000 sticker price.



2020 Chevrolet Trax

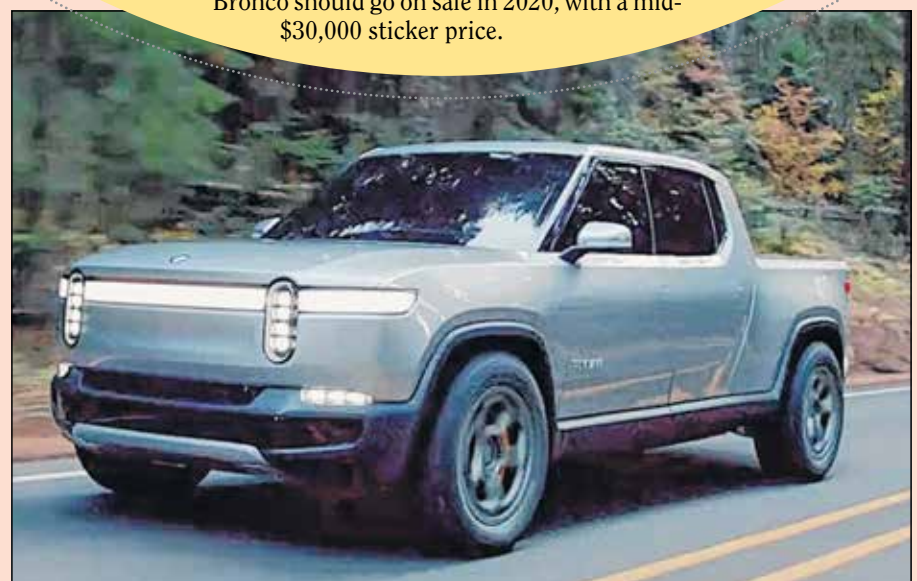
Ford, Chevy's replacements for smallest utility models

Sources claim that both the next-generation **Chevy Trax** and **Ford EcoSport** subcompact crossover SUVs are well along in their respective development processes. The 2020 Trax will launch later this year, in a slightly larger size and with more aggressive styling. It will likely keep the current turbocharged 1.4-liter four-cylinder engine.



2020 Ford EcoSport

Meanwhile, word has it that the next EcoSport (there's a chance the name will change) is at least 12-18 months away and will be built off the compact 2020 Fiesta platform, even though that subcompact will vanish from Ford's lineup after 2019. The EcoSport replacement will be positioned one size below the revived Bronco utility name that's heading to showrooms sometime in calendar 2020.



Rivian is receiving significant financing from Amazon to build the R1T electric truck.

Rivian gets a boost from Amazon

Michigan-based startup electric-truck company **Rivian** is receiving a \$700-million cash injection from investors led by online-shopping giant Amazon. Rivian's plans include launching the **R1T pickup** and **R1S utility vehicle** (each with a 400-mile battery range) from its plant in Illinois starting in 2021.

It wasn't revealed what percentage of that haul is coming directly from Amazon, or what its long term goal may be. While fellow tech giant **Google** has had its own Waymo autonomous car division for years, Amazon recently joined with venture capital firm Sequoia and others to purchase a multi-billion dollar stake in **Aurora**, a self-driving start up founded by Waymo and Tesla alumni. Could Amazon be getting in this game?

TEST DRIVE

2019 Honda Ridgeline

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Ridgeline is offered in one body style: a crew cab, with full-size doors. There's 40.9 inches of front leg room, and if you're six foot or taller, you might wish for another inch or so. Rear seat leg room measures 36.7 inches. While that's noticeably less than the subcompact Crossover HR-V we drove recently (39.3 inches), numbers are relative. Ridgeline ranks among the best on that metric amongst midsize pickups.

With front seats at full pushback, a pair of six-footers can squeeze in behind like-size folks. With the rear seats in place, there's 2.9 cubic feet of space beneath for storage. Like some other Hondas (Fit, HR-V) the rear seats can be folded up against the back of the cabin in an easy, one-hand move. So set, there's sufficient space to hold a mountain bike inside (with wheels on) or a boxed, big screen TV. The seats-up floor is also a handy spot to park your dog, though the ridge on the floor requires some padding.

The main front cabin storage is located

in a large, roll top center console. A deck of controls midway up the center stack controls HVAC functions. They're easy to reach and use. Adjustments for infotainment functions are channeled through an 8-inch touchscreen atop the center stack, on RTL-T and above trims.

The screen doesn't respond to input from a gloved hand, but secondary controls (on the steering wheel) are available as a workaround, to switch channels and adjust audio volume. That's good, because the touchscreen's cumbersome, sliding, sound control is still present on Ridgeline, though it's been replaced by a knob on some Honda models.

The top three trims also get an upgraded sound system, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility and an integrated navigation system. A second USB port has been added to lower trim levels this year (it was already a part of upper trims). RTL and RTL-T models also pick up (so to speak) a power sliding rear window and moon roof (also standard on RTL-E and Black Edition).



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

LIA HONDA
1258 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12205
518-438-4555 www.liahondaofalbany.com

MOHAWK HONDA
1780 Freemans Bridge Rd., Scotia, NY 12302
518-370-4911 www.mohawkhonda.com

Arguably the most useful safety/driver assist features on a day-to-day basis are blind spot monitoring, a rear view camera and rear cross traffic alert. Blind spot monitoring is standard on RTL-E and Black Edition, and it's bundled with rear cross traffic alert. Lane Watch — the right side rear camera system found on many Honda models in lieu of blind spot monitoring — is standard on RTL-T.

By virtue of being right side only, it's half as good as it ought to be. But that's still better than no blind spot detection, which is what the RT, Sport and RTL have. A multi-angle rearview camera is standard on all trims (enhanced version

on RTL-T and above).

Staying with safety, Honda Sensing is a suite of driver assistance and active safety technology.

Standard equipment on RTL-E and Black Edition, the package includes: forward collision warning, collision mitigation braking, road departure mitigation, adaptive cruise control, lane keeping assist and lane departure warning.

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.

