

Can PUMA Really Transform Urban Transportation?

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This is GM's attempt at an alternative vehicle?

(PhysOrg.com) -- With a June 1 deadline for settling its differences with creditors and unions looming for GM, the American automaker unveiled a joint project with Segway.

Segway, the personal motorized scooter and a general source of amusement, is developing a two-seater with GM. The plan is to create an inexpensive mode of "urban transportation". The new vehicle will be called PUMA -- Personal Urban Mobility and Accessibility.

The idea is interesting: A tiny, 600-pound vehicle that seats two (and has two main wheels). It is supposed to be powered by batteries, so [emissions](#) will be low. However, this urban transport device is strictly for city driving only; it's top speed is about 35 miles per hour. You should be able to go 35 miles on a single three-hour charge that is estimated to cost about 35 cents. There seems to be a recurring theme...

PUMA is not going to be released anytime soon, though. Segway and GM are aiming for a 2012 release of the product, which will come equipped with GM's OnStar service. This service isn't meant just to automatically contact OnStar in the event that your tiny PUMA is mangled. PUMA -- according to GM and Segway -- will be designed with OnStar help to prevent collisions and avoid congested routes. GM is actually claiming that PUMA will offer "autonomous driving and parking".

Of course, GM has to get through its current problems before it can move on. However, if GM is hanging its future hopes on PUMA as its main "alternative" vehicle offering, perhaps the company should just give up. After all, there are already scooters, mopeds and bicycles that already do what the PUMA can. Although, in defense of the PUMA, it does appear that it would be more comfortable on a rainy day.

More information: www.segway.com/puma/

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