

3 ultra-efficient cars win \$10M innovation award (w/ Video)

September 16 2010, By DEE-ANN DURBIN , AP Auto Writer



This Aug. 2, 2010 photo provided by Progressive Insurance, Edison2's "Very Light Car #98" is shown during track testing at the Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Mich. The ultralight, gas-powered car that can get 102 miles per gallon is among the winners of the \$10 million Automotive X Prize, a contest to develop highly efficient, production-ready vehicles. (AP Photo/Progressive Insurance Automotive X PRIZE) NO SALES

(AP) -- An ultralight, gas-powered car that can get 102 miles per gallon is among the winners of the \$10 million Automotive X Prize, a contest to develop highly efficient, production-ready vehicles.

While it's not likely to go on sale in its current form, Edison2's "Very Light Car No. 98" was cited for its innovative use of lightweight materials, its superior aerodynamics and its very low production cost. Oliver Kuttner, the founder of Lynchburg, Va.-based Edison2, said his

target price is \$20,000.

The "Very Light Car No. 98" seats four and is built on a steel frame of mostly aluminum parts. That keeps the weight at 830 pounds, around a quarter of the weight of an average car. It has a space-age, race car look and a tear drop shape, with the wheels set far out from the car to help deflect crashes.

Kuttner, a real-estate developer and race-car driver, said a team of around 100 people - including many racing veterans - developed the car. They opted for a one-cylinder, ethanol-capable engine instead of an electric car because batteries add weight and gas is readily available. But the team said its innovations in [aerodynamics](#) and the use of lightweight materials could apply to any kind of vehicle.

"We've been working on these types of solutions, really, all our lives," Kuttner said. "In racing, fuel is a precious resource. One less pit stop is the difference between winning and losing."

Edison2 won \$5 million, the bulk of the prize money. Kuttner said Edison2 spent more than that to develop the car, but we wouldn't give an exact figure.

Some of the prize money will go into development of the next generation light car, Kuttner said. He said the team is now focused on making the car more consumer-friendly and "easier on the eyes" but without adding to its weight or hurting its [fuel economy](#). Once Edison2 is convinced the car is ready, Kuttner plans to find partners to manufacture and distribute it.

Two other car makers will split \$2.5 million each: Mooresville, N.C.-based Li-Ion Motors Corp., which made the Wave2, a two-seat electric [car](#) that gets 187 miles on a charge, and X-Tracer Team of

Winterthur, Switzerland, whose motorcycle-like electric mini-car, the E-Tracer 7009, gets 205 miles on a charge. Both of those companies are taking orders for their cars. X-Tracer Team says the electric E-Tracer will be available to U.S. consumers next year.

The [X Prize](#), which is funded by Progressive Insurance, gave 111 teams 30 months to develop their vehicles and then put them through driving, safety and efficiency tests.

All of the winners are now eligible for a U.S. Department of Energy program that will help ready the vehicles for introduction to the U.S. market.

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