

Foldable robot scooter wows at Tokyo Motor Show

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Japan's robot venture Kowa-tmsuk unveils its electric personal mobility "Kobot" at a press preview of the Tokyo Motor Show on December 1, 2011. The ultra compact electric vehicle features extensible and collapsible mechanisms for a reduced parking space footprint.

A foldable robot scooter controlled by a smart phone wowed visitors to the Tokyo Motor Show on Thursday as its makers unveiled what they hope will be the future of urban driving.

The Kobot is a three-wheel scooter with just one seat that can be packed away after use in a space of around one square metre (10 square feet).

With a target speed of 30 kilometres (18 miles) per hour, makers Kowa Tmsuk hope the electrically-powered vehicle will be perfect for

navigating crowded city streets, without adding to [air pollution](#).

"This is a robot you can ride," said Yoichi Takamoto, the president of Tmsuk, one half of the joint venture and a company that has previously developed robots designed for medical care and disaster rescue operations.

The driver uses a smart phone to remotely tell the Kobot to fold its rear wheel and seat onto the main body of the vehicle when not in use, something designers say is ideal for cities like Tokyo where parking space is at a premium.

Kowa Tmsuk president Yoshito Serita said his company was aiming to have the vehicles ready for the market by next autumn.

"They are unique vehicles designed to be super-small, super-zippy and full of playful spirit," he said.

Other non-auto companies were also displaying their wares at the motor show, which opened Wednesday.

Japanese synthetic fibre maker Toray Industries, which supplies [carbon fibre](#) materials for Boeing's fuel-efficient 787 Dreamliner aircraft, was showing off its concept electric vehicle made of the same materials as the plane.

The car, named "Teewave", has a body made entirely of the light-weight carbon fibre, which its designers say will make it not only cheaper to run, but stronger too.

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