

Spanish group demos "Hiriko" fold-up urban EV (w/ Video)

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(Phys.org) -- Ten years ago, MIT's Media lab began working on a concept for an urban vehicle to replace bicycle sharing, and other options people were using to get them to and from public transportation, to cover that first mile, as it's known; the distance between where they live and the train station; or the last mile, from the train to where they work. It's a problem that has become more urgent as congestion in city centers worsens over time as cities become ever more crowded.

That initiative has led to a working relationship with a group of auto parts suppliers in the Basque region of Spain, who have formed what they call the [Hiriko Driving Mobility Group](#), whose purpose is to solve congestion and parking problems in downtown city areas. The result is a [car](#) concept called the Hiriko, which in Basque, means, "from the city." It's an electric vehicle that when driven is about eight feet long, but when parked, can be squeezed or folded down to just five feet, which is shorter than the average bicycle.



The idea is to sell a slew of the Hiriko EVs to municipalities, who then rent them to commuters, as shared vehicles. A person leaving work could walk to a lot where several of the Hirikos are parked, rent one to drive to the train station, leave it there in a special lot, ride the train home, rent another Hiriko to get home, keep it overnight, then drive it back to the special lot, leave it there and then take the train to work and so on. Thus,

those that rent the Hirikos would not rent a specific car, but would get a different one every time. In such a scenario, those that rent would do so by the month or year, to make things easier of course. The advantage to commuters would be an easy way to get to and from work while the advantage to the city would be fewer vehicles clogging streets, less air pollution and more vehicles able to fit into parking lots because of the tiny parking requirements of the Hiriko.

To make parking even easier engineers have designed all four tires to turn independently, allowing drivers to slide sideways into spots if necessary. The car would not be for everyone of course as it can only go 31 miles per hour maximum, though it does have a range of 75 miles. The company has already made 20 of the cars which are being tested by various groups. They are currently trying to sell to San Francisco, Berlin and Barcelona, at a price of about \$16,000 each.



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