

Three-wheel \$6,800 car gears for 2015 US launch

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Members of the media inspect a prototype of three-wheeled car, the brainchild of Paul Elio, founder and CEO of Elio Motors, on the sidelines of the 2014 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) January 9, 2014 in Las Vegas

The sleek three-wheeled car looks futuristic, but, as its creator acknowledges, it uses no new technology.

What makes the Elio Motors vehicle unique is its ultra-high [fuel economy](#) and an ultra-low price tag: \$6,800.

The vehicle, which was on display at the Showstoppers startup showcase on the sidelines of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, promises to deliver as much as 84 miles (134 kilometers) per gallon (3.8 liters) of gasoline for highway driving.

It accelerates as quickly as many cars on the road—to 100 miles per hour in 9.6 seconds, according to the company. Urban fuel economy is estimated at 49 miles per gallon.

Company founder Paul Elio said he came up with the idea because "I got mad about seeing all this wealth leave the country" for imported petroleum.

An engineer by training, Elio began the firm in 2008 and recently took over an abandoned General Motors plant in Louisiana—one which had been producing the gas-guzzling Hummer.

In order to deliver the best fuel economy, the car has a cockpit wide enough only for the driver, with a passenger seat in the rear. It has two wheels in front and tapers in the rear to a single wheel.

"Front-to-back seating, that's the key to mileage," Elio told AFP.

This makes it principally a one-person car, but Elio said the vehicle is a good solution for the millions who drive along to work or leisure events.

Elio readily admits there is no special technology in the car—it has a three-cylinder internal combustion gasoline engine, power windows, air conditioning and anti-lock brakes. While it does not have some of the on-board electronic gadgetry found in other vehicles, drivers can connect

their smartphones for navigation, apps and more.

"This was a design completely based on existing engineering," says company spokesman Jim Andrews.

The car has a top crash-impact rating from the National Highway Transportation Safety Board, and is expected to meet all US safety standards.

Elio is targeting the US market but hopes to eventually ship internationally.

He has more than 6,000 orders from customers who have paid a deposit, and hopes to start delivering in the first quarter of 2015.

He also plans to speak with major automakers, including Chrysler, about possible partnerships.

It's not clear how much of an impact the Elio [vehicle](#) will have, but it comes after a sizzling debut for another startup carmaker, Tesla, which sells a \$70,000 electric car.

Other three-wheelers may be in the works as well: a three-wheel concept car from Toyota was on display at the huge electronics exhibition.

Elio said he is encouraged by the response to the [car](#).

"We didn't design it to be cool," he said. "It was cool by accident."

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