

Ford unveils its first all-electric car (Update)

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Ford unveiled its first strictly electric car on Friday, a Focus which is expected to get up to 100 miles (160 kilometers) on a single charge and will be available in North America late this year.

Alan Mulally, chief executive of the number two US automaker, introduced the four-door passenger car at the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Mulally declined to detail the hatchback's total range or how much it would cost, but a Ford spokesman said the Focus Electric's mileage on a single charge would be "competitive" with similar electric vehicles such as the Nissan Leaf.

The Nissan Leaf has a range of up to 100 miles before needing to be hooked up to a power outlet.

Ford said the lithium-ion battery in the Focus, which has a top speed of 84 miles per hour (136 kilometers per hour) can be fully charged at a home 240-volt charging station in three to four hours, half the time of the Leaf.

Mulally acknowledged the need for regular charges would be seen as a drawback by some customers.

The brand new all-electric Ford Focus is displayed as Ford Motor Company President and CEO Alan Mulally delivers a keynote address at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show at the Las Vegas Hilton in Nevada.

"We know electric vehicles are not for everyone, they're only part of the solution for greener driving," he said.

But, Mulally added, "we know that many customers are looking forward to driving a zero emissions electric vehicle and never having to visit a gas station again.

"We believe most of these customers are prepared to embrace the reality that a full battery does not last as long as a full tank of gas," he said.

Ford said the range of Focus Electric will be enough to "cover the majority of daily driving habits of Americans."

Rebecca Lindland, an analyst with IHS Automotive, said "the risk to the marketplace is that consumers aren't asking for these."

Hybrid auto sales fell last year to 2.4 percent of the US market from 2.8 percent in 2009, according to the research firm Autodata.

A lack of public charging stations is another barrier to adoption. There are currently only 1,800 public charging stations in the United States.

But Ford said more are coming. "We know that during the next 18 months we're going to see at least 12,000 installed in cities around the country," said Mike Tinskey, Ford's electric vehicle manager.

Nissan delivered its first all-electric Leaf to a San Francisco customer last month and General Motors has also recently begun sales of its plug-in electric hybrid the Chevy Volt.

Toyota is also planning on bringing a plug-in electric hybrid to market soon and will introduce a wagon version of the popular Prius hybrid on Monday at the Detroit auto show.

The Focus Electric is one of five hybrid, plug-in hybrid or all-electric vehicles Ford plans to bring to North America and Europe by 2013.

Ford said the Focus Electric would be built at its Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne, Michigan, where the gasoline-powered Focus is produced.

It has not yet decided where the Focus Electric for European markets would be built.

Ford integrated its latest smart driving technology, such as hands-free voice commands, into the Focus Electric along with a touch display mounted on the dashboard which features an on-board navigation system.

Ford also developed a mobile application for the car, MyFord Mobile, that allows drivers to remotely monitor and control battery charge levels.

The home charging station for the Focus Electric includes a feature developed by Microsoft which allows owners to charge the vehicle during off-peak hours when electricity rates are the cheapest.

In keeping with the "green" appeal of the car, Ford said the seats in the Focus Electric are made from recyclable material and that recycled blue jeans were used as insulation.



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Ford Motor Company President and CEO Alan Mulally plugs in the brand new all-electric Ford Focus after he delivered a keynote address at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show at the Las Vegas Hilton in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The company came out with an all-electric van, the Transit Connect Electric, in North America last year.

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