

Flying car 'Transition' gets road approval from NHTSA

July 7 2011, by Bob Yirka



(PhysOrg.com) -- Terrafugia's [car/plane vehicle called the Transition](#), has received approval from the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) clearing the way for delivery to customers sometime next year. Last year it received approval to fly as a "light sport aircraft" from the Federal Aviation Administration, but not before being given a special exemption to fly 110 pounds heavier than other's in its class. This time around it had to convince the NHTSA to allow a special exemption for its Plexiglas windows and aircraft landing capable tires.

The Transition is able to move between the sky and road by making use of push-button retractable wings that narrow the plane enough to allow it to fit on standard roads. In its current configuration, the Transition is 19 feet 9 inches long with a wingspan of 26 feet 6 inches wide and has a height of 78 inches in flying mode; with wings folded however, it's just 90 inches wide, 18 feet 9 inches long and of course a little taller at 80 inches. It has room for a pilot and one passenger and also has airbags and utilizes an energy absorbing crumple zone similar to that used in many cars. Also, like race cars, it has a carbon fiber safety cage in case of rollovers.

Terrafugia, based in a Woburn, Massachusetts has been seeking approval from both the NHTSA and FAA since the maiden flight of the Transition in March of 29. To receive approval from the NHTSA, the company had to convince the agency that its light Plexiglas windows, the kind normally used on aircraft, would be preferable to the standard heavy, shatterproof glass required for automobiles and trucks. They also had to show that the tires used would be suitable for highway driving; no small feat since they were the very same tires shown to the FAA last year that showed they were also safe for use in landing.

Though it doesn't appear Terrafugia has specifically said so, it's clear the new vehicle will be marketed towards the well-to-do, who have the money to pay for such a vehicle (and it's maintenance), space to house it, and private destinations that can accommodate both flying and driving.

With approval from both agencies, Terrafugia is now ready to move its flying car (or is that drivable plane?) into production, and expects to begin deliveries to customers next year. The current price of \$250,000 may or may not be the final price, though customers can currently lay down a deposit of \$10,000 to ensure they are first in line.

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