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2014 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 Features 'Flying Car' Logic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

air conditioning. That's it. It's a car that can be driven on the street, but was really built to be driven on the track. It's a very specific niche part of the Camaro portfolio.

"The reception so far has been positive. We'll see what happens when the public has a chance to buy them."

Technologies such as PTM and the track-oriented logic helped the Camaro Z/28 log a lap on Germany's Nürburgring road course that was four seconds faster than the Camaro ZL1, and beat published times for the Porsche 911 Carrera S and the Lamborghini Murcielago LP640, Wise said.

The Flugplatz section of the Nürburgring has a rise that engaged the logic during the Z/28's 7:37 lap time.

Additionally, PTM enables the driver to press the accelerator pedal to wide open at the exit of the corner and manages acceleration based on the given vehicle dynamics.

Five performance levels, or modes, are available to accommodate a variety of driving conditions.

The track-oriented "flying car" logic is available in all PTM modes, but it is most effective in Mode 5, calibrated for the fastest lap times, Wise said.

The Z/28 represents the first non-Magnetic Ride Control application of PTM, pioneered on the Corvette ZR1 and incorporated

in the Chevrolet Camaro ZL1. Engineers further refined it for the car on the road course at GM's Milford Proving Ground in Michigan and on Virginia International Raceway and Road Atlanta.

Like the Flugplatz, a section of the Milford course proved particularly effective in calibrating the logic, Wise said.

The Milford course features a hill sandwiched between turns Pahrump 1 and 2, named for and based on a pair of challenging corners on the 3.4-mile-long road course at Spring Valley Motorsports Ranch, in Pahrump, Nev.

"The hill between Pahrumps 1 and 2 is ideal for testing the feature," said Wise.

"The car noticeably lifts as it clears the top of the rise. And without the logic built into PTM, the torque reduction would unnecessarily slow the car.

"With it, the car receives full torque over the rise, which helps reduce the lap time - and it is part of the reason why PTM Mode 5 can be as good, or better, than a driver's best effort, on certain track conditions.

"The new Camaro Z/28 was bred on and for the track," said Wise.

"From the hardware bolted to the chassis to the software such as the 'flying car' logic, every element built into it was designed to help deliver faster lap times, with consistency, control and dependability."

The Van's the Thing, Now That Economy Has Turned

by TOM KRISHER
 AP Auto Writer

for Nissan North America. "The vehicles are really nearing the end of their useful life."

DETROIT (AP) - To deliver bouquets in and around Washington, D.C., Karin's Florist has two big vans, two small ones and a boxy little wagon that's clinging to life.

After the Valentine's Day rush, the Vienna, Va., business plans to get a new van to replace the wagon, a Toyota Scion xB with 180,000 miles on it that has faithfully made its rounds since 2006.

"We've got it sewn together with rubber bands and paper clips," said Maris Angolia, president of the family-owned business named after her sister.

The van purchase, the second for Karin's in the past four months, is evidence that small business owners - once too suspect of a wobbly economy to make big-ticket purchases - are starting to invest in their companies again.

The willingness to spend is good news for the auto industry and a positive sign for the broader economy.

The spending is coming for two reasons: Aging vans are simply wearing out. Plus business confidence is growing. A January survey taken for Wells Fargo found that optimism among small-business owners hit the highest level in five years. Most expect increased cash flow and hiring this year. Also, once-tight credit for small businesses has loosened, and borrowing rose in the second half of last year, according to research by Experian and Moody's.

Commercial van sales last year were up more than 40 percent since 2010, and they rose 9 percent in January even as U.S. auto sales dropped 3 percent, according to Ward's AutoInfoBank.

"A lot of these contractors have been trying to keep their old products as long as they can," said Peter Bedrosian, senior manager of Product Planning

for Nissan North America. "The vehicles are really nearing the end of their useful life."

Van sales are a bellwether for the broader economic recovery since small businesses are reluctant to spend after a recession, said Mike Jackson, director of North American forecasting for the IHS Automotive consulting firm, which predicts commercial van sales will grow 27 percent between 2013 and 2015 to nearly 400,000 per year.

Auto companies have spotted the trend, and they're moving quickly to enter a market once dominated by Ford, General Motors and Mercedes. Nissan entered the market with the NV full-size van in 2011 and the NV200, a small van, last year. Chrysler's Ram brand started selling a full-size van last year and has plans for a small van. More products are coming from GM and Ford.

Ford's Transit Connect, a van built on the guts of a compact car, created a new market for small vans when it was introduced in 2009. Before it arrived on the scene, businesses had to buy big vans even if they didn't need them. Now, if owners want better gas mileage and maneuverability but don't need huge cargo space, they have choices.

Earlier this month, GM's Chevrolet unveiled its own Nissan-made small van, the City Express, at the Chicago Auto Show. GM contracted with Nissan so it could bring a van to market quickly to take advantage of growth, said Ed Peper, the company's vice president of commercial sales.

Ford sold only 8,800 Transit Connects when it was introduced in 2009, but that grew to almost 40,000 last year. Nissan's NV 200 and the Ram Cargo Van, a modified minivan, joined the market, pushing total small van sales to more than 53,000 in 2013. Big vans saw even larger growth, with sales rising from 159,000 in 2009 to nearly 259,000 last year.

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