



FORD TRANSIT CONNECT TAXI CONCEPT OFFERS NEW PERSPECTIVE ON URBAN TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

- Ford reveals fuel-efficient, nimble Transit Connect Taxi concept in the taxi capital of America – New York City.
- A cavernous, easy-to-access interior marries the maneuverability and fuel efficiency of a small car, showing how perfectly suited Transit Connect is for carrying people and cargo through congested city streets.
- Transit Connect provides another example of how Ford is leveraging its global product lineup. Transit Connect is designed, engineered and manufactured by Ford of Europe. It was named International Van of the Year when launched in 2003.

NEW YORK, March 19, 2008 – Ford, the leading provider of taxis in North America, is offering a fresh take on taxis at the New York International Auto Show.

“Taxis are an important part of the urban landscape, and the Transit Connect Taxi concept represents a potential game-changer, given its small footprint, comfortable, spacious interior, fuel-efficient engine and affordability,” said Mark Fields, president of The Americas. “We’re interested to see how people react.”

Ford has been a leader in the taxi business for decades. The Ford Crown Victoria is the leader in the taxi market in cities throughout the U.S.

Ford also was the first manufacturer to introduce gas-electric hybrid-powered taxis into North American fleets with the launch of the Ford Escape Hybrid in San Francisco and New York City in early 2005. Today, New York’s Escape hybrid fleet has grown to more than 800, including the original 18 that joined the fleet in 2005, still running with the original nickel-metal hydride batteries intact.

The Transit Connect Taxi concept offers a new perspective on how to move people and their gear through congested city streets – more cleanly, efficiently and with new technology that could revolutionize the taxi industry.

Built on a dedicated, commercial vehicle platform and tested to Ford's toughest truck standards, Transit Connect is specially made to meet the extreme demands of taxi service.

With its standard, 2.0-liter, four-cylinder engine and automatic transmission, Transit Connect delivers estimated fuel economy of 19 mpg in the city – a more than 30 percent improvement in fuel economy and nearly 90 percent lower tailpipe emissions than many of today's traditional taxis.

A Small Footprint with Big Potential

Transit Connect blends well into cityscapes. Its smart, vertical stacked design is able to accommodate three rear-cab passengers and 75 cu. ft. of parcels – in part because it emulates the city skyline that surrounds it.

“When cities ran out of horizontal space at the turn of the 20th century, architects started to build upward,” said Peter Horbury, executive director of Design, The Americas. “The Transit Connect Taxi concept brings that same idea to the streets, changing the shape of the space, making it taller with a smaller and narrow footprint.”

In addition to its new shape, the Transit Connect Taxi concept's paint scheme and expressive graphic treatment lend it unique personality.

Designers didn't abandon iconic yellow paint – but they did change the formula to a more modern hue that contrasts with deep gray, molded-in-color fender flares as well as front and rear fascias that serve dual duty as impact-resistant bumpers.

Most noticeable up top is a futuristic interpretation of the yellow “taxi bubble.” The space-age looking flat-panel unit, mounted horizontally above the Taxi concept's roof, is lit on all four sides – green if the cab is available, orange if it's occupied.

Easy Access to a Spacious, Tech-Laden Interior

The Transit Connect Taxi concept gives “curb service” new meaning. With 6.5-inches of ground clearance, passengers step easily through the sliding doors and into the cab, instead of sliding down into the back seat.

The concept's standard high-roof van offers ample headroom, accentuated by a vista roof that brightens the three-person passenger compartment and provides views of the urban architecture.

The Taxi concept also features a new electronic infotainment and navigation system that shows passengers their accumulating cab fare, a scrolling news, weather, sports score and stock ticker. Using the 13-inch diagonal touch screen, passengers also can select their choice of video and music channels, follow the taxi's journey on a map or scroll through a list of points of interest along the route – including restaurants, museums and shops.

Once at the destination, the screen displays the fare with options to pay via cash, credit or debit. Cardholders can swipe their card, enter a pin number for debit, calculate the tip and complete the transaction right from their seat. Cash-paying passengers can use “Sputnik,” a rotating billet aluminum softball-sized orb that replaces the outdated sliding ashtray used on today's taxis.

Ahead of the partition, the driver's area comes with a fold-flat passenger seat that doubles as a work station. The Transit Connect Taxi concept is equipped with a special version of the Ford Work Solutions integrated computer.

The in-dash computer, powered by Microsoft Auto, provides full high-speed Internet access via the Sprint Mobile Broadband Network and works with Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones. Thanks to Garmin navigation, the system features real-time weather and traffic information, allowing drivers to find the most trouble-free routes.

A History of Strong Products

In addition to taxi leadership, Ford has made a name for itself across the Atlantic for vans such as Transit Connect that people can rely on to get the job done. Transit Connect is designed, engineered and manufactured by Ford of Europe.

Launched in 2003, Transit Connect was named International Van of the Year its first year in-market. Transit Connect will come to the U.S. in summer 2009, as a brand-new offering for small business owners seeking fuel-efficient, flexible transportation with plenty of room to fit their needs.

“Transit Connect provides another example of how Ford is leveraging its global product assets,” Fields said. “Small business owners have told us how eager they are to see this product come to the U.S. next year, and it will be interesting to see how many other types of customers might want a Transit Connect in their garage or driveway as well.”

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Pictures are available on www.fordpress.be

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