Call it car, call it aircraft, but Transition is in the wings

July 21 2018, by Nancy Owano

Credit: Terrafugia

The first flying car? Yes, we agree. The kind of image we associate with an animated movie or new video game.

Unless you go on a vendor's website and you discover this is for real, and stay tuned for next year. The name of the company is Woburn, Massachusetts-based Terrafugia and they're saying, get ready for next year when the first cars swing into production mode—that is, the first production models will go on sale in 2019.

This what the company stated: "Terrafugia, Inc. announced new features in the Transition production vehicle, a two-seat auto and aircraft, including updates to the interior, safety systems, motor, and flight instrumentation. The latest features and systems will be incorporated and verified in the next test vehicles. The first production vehicles will come to market in 2019."

The Terrafugia CEO is Chris Jaran. He said in a Bloomberg interview earlier this year that the product has wings that fold up; you park it in your garage, and when you are ready to get moving, you drive it to your nearby airport, unfold the wings, and in less than a minute take off to wherever you want to go.

If you want to call it car or aircraft, either way, it is a two-seater. And if you want to call the flying car by its official name, it is Transition.

News and Features Editor @ Roadshow, Kyle Hyatt, weighed in. "The Terrafugia Transition is a combination hybrid-electric road vehicle and pusher-style propeller-driven aircraft. It definitely looks more aircraft than car."

Now, if you want a description of which target users are likely to buy one, don't ask Hyatt because he would not know where to begin. "Like most two-in-one designs, it doesn't seem like it's particularly great at either flying or driving," he said, and "it's hard to imagine who the buyer for this would actually be."

Meanwhile, one might look for these features: The motor's hybrid mode involves an internal combustion engine and a LiFePO4 (lithium iron phosphate chemistry) battery. The throttle incorporates a boost feature for a brief burst of extra power while flying.

As Jon Fingas in *Engadget* interpreted this, "the Transition now drives in hybrid mode with a combination of a conventional gas-powered motor and a safer-than-usual lithium-ion phosphate battery."

In the air, the Transition will have a cruise range of 400 miles. The top speeds are up to 100 miles per hour. The Transition on the ground will move at highway speeds.

CEO Jaran said in the Bloomberg interview that because they are a flying car they have to meet the regulations of the National Highway safety group as well as the FAA. He said they built in the safety aspects and safety represents quite a list because they have to satisfy safety items for both types of transport—air bags, seat belts, parachute.

Terrafugia is partnering with suppliers for avionics and parachutes. Dynon is providing the EFIS (Electrical Flight Information Systems) and BRS is providing a parachute system.

The company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, described as a global automotive group. ZGH is described on its website as a pioneer in the Chinese and global automotive industry.

"In line with our commitment to innovation and new mobility solutions, we acquired American flying car company, Terrafugia which plans to launch the world's first commercially available flying passenger vehicle in 2019 and the first Vertical Take Off and Landing (VTOL) flying car in 2023."

More information: www.terrafugia.com/first-flyin … n-with-new-features/

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