

Toyota shows new Prius hybrid with more power, range, style

November 16 2022, by YURI KAGEYAMA and TOM KRISHER



This photo provided by Toyota Motor Corporation shows new Toyota gas-electric Prius hybrid models. The new Toyota gas-electric Prius hybrid not only comes with more power, acceleration and driving range. It's also more stylish, scrapping the rather stodgy angular body for a sleekly futuristic look. Credit: Toyota Motor Corporation via AP

The new Toyota gas-electric Prius hybrid not only comes with more power, acceleration and driving range. It's also more stylish, scrapping the rather stodgy angular body for a sleekly futuristic look.

Simon Humphries, senior general manager of Global Toyota design who unveiled the car in Tokyo and Los Angeles on Wednesday, stressed that the company was still defying the skeptics who keep asking how much longer the Japanese automaker will stick with hybrids in a rapidly electrifying industry.

"Simply because the Prius is an eco-car within everyone's reach. In order to achieve carbon neutrality, everyone in the world must participate," he told reporters. "We need ecological solutions within reach of the many. And it needs to start today, not tomorrow."

The fifth-generation Prius hybrid models will go on sale this winter first in Japan then the U.S. A plug-in version will hit the market next year, according to Toyota Motor Corp. Prices were not announced.

The automaker swapped an older nickel-metal-hydride battery for a smaller, lighter lithium-ion battery that puts out 15% more energy. The engine grows from 1.8 liters to 2, and the horsepower rises from 121 to above 190. As a result, zero to 60 mph (97 kilometers per hour) acceleration drops from over 10 seconds to around 7 seconds depending on the Prius version.

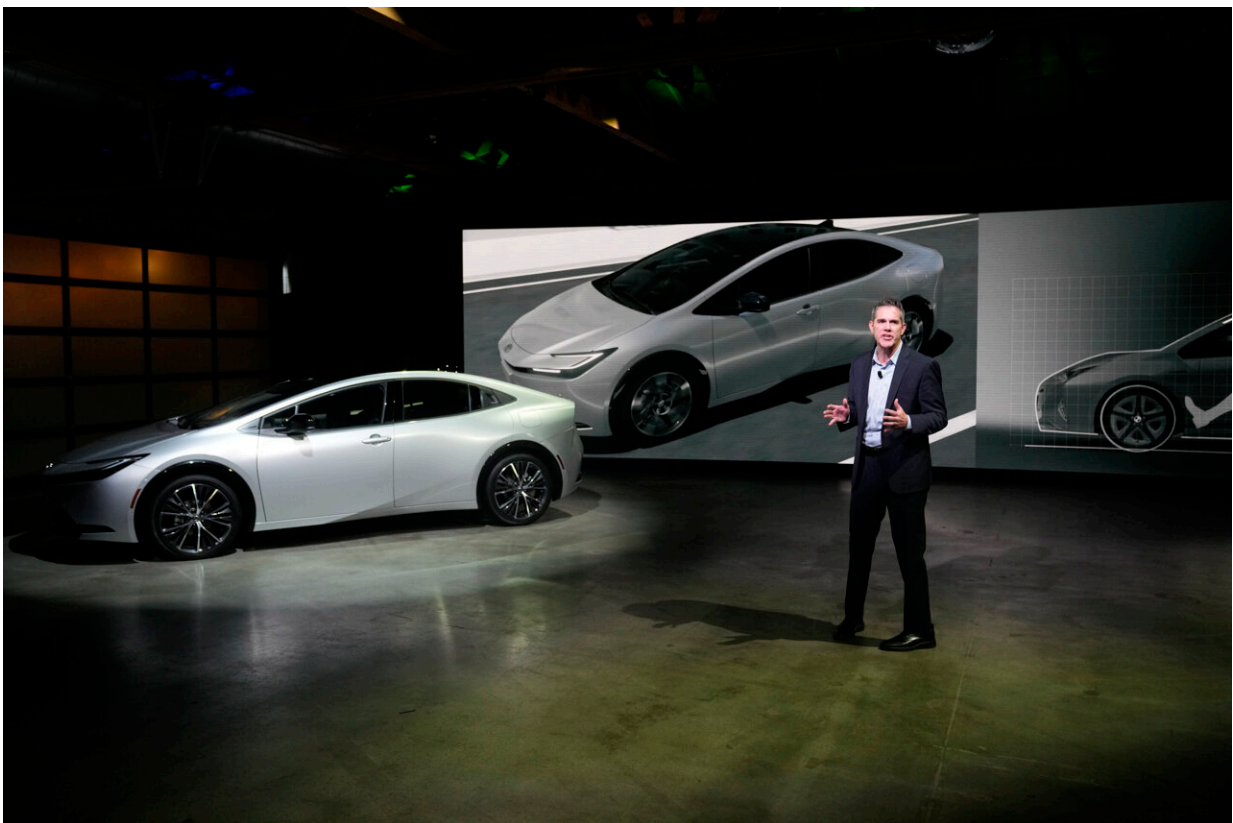
"That really will make for more confident driving," said Stephanie Brinley, principal automotive analyst for S&P Global Mobility.

The Prius, which first went on sale in 1997, switches back and forth between a gasoline engine and electric motor to deliver a cleaner drive than the models with regular combustion engines.

Toyota estimates the 2023 Prius will get 57 mpg in combined city and highway driving, calling it the most efficient Prius ever.

Electric cars are zero-emissions but need recharging. Some consumers are worried about running out of juice on the roads. A hybrid always has the gas engine as backup.

Toyota has cumulatively sold more than 20.3 million hybrid vehicles, including Prius cars, around the world so far. The Prius, which means "pioneer" or "first" in Latin, has defined Toyota as a brand as much as its Lexus luxury models.



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, introduces the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Still, Toyota has sometimes been criticized by environmentalists as dragging its feet on electrification, although some analysts say that's a bit unfair given that other automakers also have few electric cars in their lineups, and many others have developed various hybrid models.

"The sale of more hybrid vehicles, including the Prius, drags us further into the climate crisis," said Daniel Read of Greenpeace East Asia, based in Tokyo.

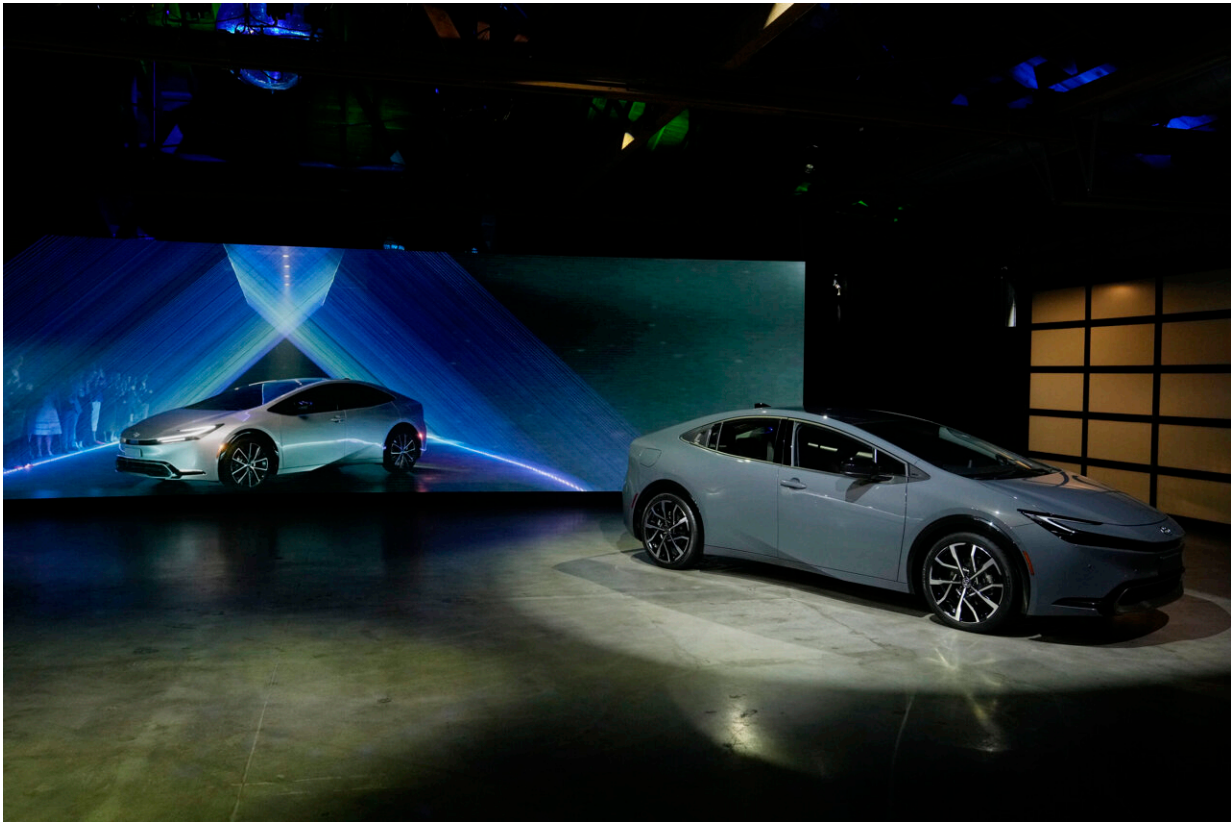
Read said electric vehicles and fuel-cell models are better solutions against climate change than hybrids.

Humphries said the new Prius was styled to be more stable, with a lower center of gravity, bigger tires, curvaceous lines for its overall design and a fancy interior.

"We really believed the next step for Prius was to become a 'car without compromises' in order to increase its appeal to the customer," said Humphries.



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, introduces the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



The 2023 Toyota Prius is introduced on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, talks about the engine for the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



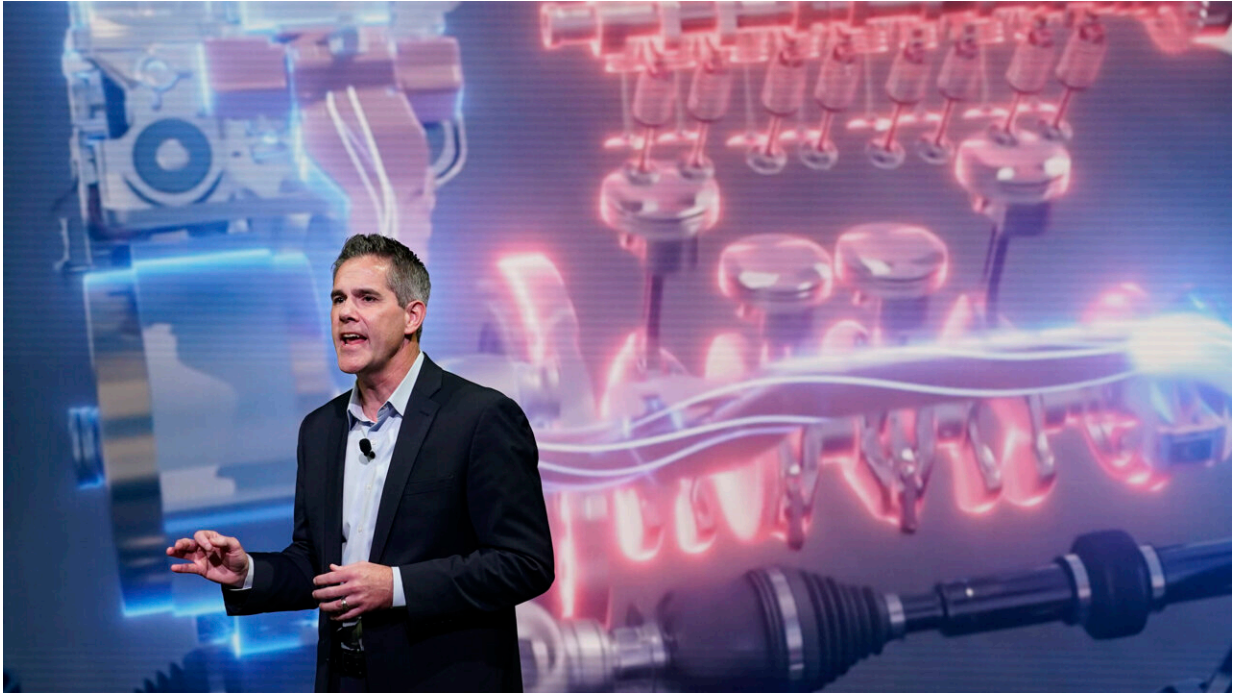
David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, introduces the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, introduces the 2023 Toyota Prius, Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



The interior of the Toyota bZ Compact SUV concept car is seen on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, talks about the battery for the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, talks about the company's plan for electric vehicles during the introduction of the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, talks about the company's fleet during the introduction of the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, introduces the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



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The Toyota bZ Compact SUV concept car is shown on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



David Christ, Group Vice President and General Manager for Toyota Motor North America, introduces the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



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Ian Cartabiano, Vice President of Advance Design for Toyota Motor talks about the 2023 Toyota Prius as some of the company's concept cars flash on a screen on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



Jason Allan, a writer with Kelley Blue Book, looks at the interior of the 2023 Toyota Prius on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022, in Los Angeles. Credit: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

The Prius, with its revamped styling and efficiency, will compete better not only with other hybrid models but also with the available generation of fully electric vehicles,

The Prius models have always served as a kind of bridge to a time when there are more charging stations for EVs, said Brinley, who believes the new Prius stacks up better against hybrids and plug-ins from Hyundai, Kia, Ford and Jeep.

By adding 50% to the battery range, which translates to around 38 miles

(61 kilometers), it can go far enough to cover the average U.S. driver's commute and errands around town. The hybrid powertrain allows for road trips without worrying about a charging network that's not yet complete, Brinley said.

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