

German automaker BMW ramps up electric vehicle offerings

17 March 2021, by David McHugh



The BMW Group headquarters are pictured in Munich, Germany, Wednesday, March 16, 2021. German automaker BMW said Wednesday it intends to speed up the rollout of new electric cars, vowing to bring battery powered models to 50% of global sales by 2030. (Peter Kneffel/dpa via AP)

German automaker BMW said Wednesday it intends to speed the rollout of new electric cars, vowing to bring battery-powered models to 50% of global sales by 2030. The company underlined the point by unveiling a new all-electric model three months ahead of plan.

BMW declined, however, to follow General Motors and other automakers who have said [their goal is to phase out internal combustion passenger vehicles by a specific date](#). Instead, the Munich-based carmaker said it would adjust production among battery, hybrid and efficient internal combustion engines as [different parts of the world adopt electric driving at different rates](#).

CEO Oliver Zipse said during the company's annual news conference that electrification was proceeding at a "higher speed." He said BMW would sell its millionth electrified vehicle this year

and sell another million by 2025. Zipse said the company was working on a new, all-electric framework for its range of electric cars coming from 2025.

Yet during an online conference call with journalists he said there was "no end date" for development and sale of new vehicles with internal combustion engines. He said it was unlikely that all markets around the world would move to electric only at the same time, and that the company planned to sell cars with conventional engines across its 140 markets "as long as customers are willing to pay for these products."

In particular, he said that BMW's plug-in hybrids "are here to stay for quite some time" despite recent criticism of the technology from environmentalists that some owners rely mostly on the diesel or gasoline engine. Such hybrids have the advantage that they can run emissions-free—and can be eligible for government incentives—but have the conventional engine in case there's no place at hand to charge. Hybrids also offer the brisk acceleration and quiet that come from having an electric motor.

Zipse cited the "sheer driving pleasure" from hybrids as one reason he believes their future "has just begun."

BMW used the occasion to reveal the production version of the i4, a battery-powered vehicle with four doors and sloping roofline dubbed a "gran coupe" by the company. The car will join three existing electrics—the i3, Mini SE and iX3 sport utility—and a fifth, the iX, also is expected to come out this year.

Zipse cautioned that the speed of adoption of battery-only cars would depend on the rollout of more charging infrastructure.

GM has said it hopes to phase out gasoline and

diesel vehicles by 2035. Volvo Cars, owned by China's Zhejiang Geely Holding, says it plans to sell only electric vehicles by 2030, and Jaguar Land Rover says its Jaguar brand will be all-electric by 2025.

While government regulation is forcing automakers to sell more electrics in the European Union and in China, the adoption has been slower in the United States. BMW expects parts of the U.S. to continue favoring larger internal combustion vehicles for some time.

The E.U. is requiring automakers to meet lower limits on average emissions of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas blamed by scientists for global warming. The new lower limit of 95 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometer took effect at the start of the year.

Since battery-only cars are rated at zero emissions, automakers have turned to them to bring down their fleet averages. That led to a surge in electric sales at the end of 2020; in December, nearly one in four cars sold in Europe was either battery-only or a plug-in hybrid.

BMW also held out the possibility of building cars using hydrogen fuel cells instead of batteries.

BMW also indicated it was not going to follow competitor Volkswagen in building a network of battery factories but instead intends to work closely with partners to supply the batteries it needs. Volkswagen on Monday said it would build a network of six large battery factories in Europe, building on its existing two facilities in Germany and Sweden.

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