



One for the road - slowly

A Chinese-made, all-electric automobile, the ZX40, comes to Baltimore with a top speed of 25 mph

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[Excerpt]

With gas prices at more than \$3 a gallon, a no-gas-required, all-electric car would seem to sell itself.

The catches are that the **Miles ZX40** reaches only about 25 mph, has a range of about 40 miles and takes five to eight hours to fully charge. Despite those limitations, its importer and electric-car advocates see it as a demonstration of developing technology that may one day lead to consumer-quality electric vehicles.

"I believe we will see the cars become more sophisticated and fully highway capable," said David Goldstein, president of the Electric Vehicle Association of Greater Washington, based in Gaithersburg.

The ZX40, a street-legal electric vehicle manufactured in China, is being imported by the U.S.-based Miles Automotive Group and is to go on sale at Foreign Motors on Belair Road within the next week. Scott Donahoo, owner of Foreign Motors, said he will get a 10-car shipment to start and possibly more later.



Donahoo has one ZX40 on his lot now. The car plugs into a wall socket to be charged, according to Miles Automotive. It comes equipped with the amenities of a commercial passenger vehicle, including a CD player, air conditioning, cup holders and fog lamps.

Donahoo will be the only dealer in Maryland to sell the ZX40, Miles Automotive chief executive David Hirsch said. The ZX40 will cost about \$15,600, including freight, Donahoo said. He is hoping to market the car as a commercial vehicle, primarily to security services and for use in compact areas such as college campuses.

Miles Automotive plans to begin distributing a highway-capable electric car that can go up to 80 mph by the end of 2007, CEO Hirsch said. The car is being crash-tested in China under U.S. safety specifications, he said.

Goldstein said advancing battery technology, including lithium ion, may one day make batteries capable of powering cars for many miles and at highway speeds. He said lithium ion batteries are about four times as powerful as lead acid batteries, which are typically used now.

"It's the early stages of what we see as an emerging trend," Goldstein said. "It's no doubt we're going to see more Chinese-built cars in the future of the U.S."