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July 30, 2010 9:54 AM PDT



# Chrysler steps on the gas and puts EVs, hybrids on hold

by Automotive News

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DETROIT--Chrysler Group has scaled back its ambitious plans for hybrids and electric vehicles and instead is placing its green bets on internal combustion engines that use Fiat technology.

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As Chrysler slid toward bankruptcy in September 2008, it rolled out several hybrid and all-electric vehicles to bolster its green credentials in the eyes of the federal government.

Then-CEO Bob Nardelli put hybrids and electrics on the fast track under the umbrella of a separate division called ENVI and made alternative propulsion a centerpiece of Chrysler's survival strategy. The company, at the time owned by Cerberus Capital Management, showed off plug-in hybrid versions of the Chrysler Town and Country minivan and Jeep Wrangler and an all-electric sports [car](#) called the Dodge Circuit, designed with help from Lotus.

What a difference a change in management makes. Now, with Fiat input, Chrysler is wringing extra fuel economy out of the internal combustion engine wherever possible.

"When we made the alliance with Fiat, we had a lot more opportunity with fuel economy with lighter platforms and smaller engines," said Chrysler spokesman Nick Cappa. "The vehicles



Chrysler showed the Dodge Circuit EV at the 2009 Detroit auto show.

previously associated with ENVI were technology (Credit: CBS) demonstration vehicles."

There are no plans to make production versions of those ENVI vehicles. The division was absorbed into Chrysler's powertrain operations.

Chrysler canceled plans to build a Two-Mode hybrid version of the Ram 1500. Two-Mode hybrid versions of the Chrysler Aspen and Dodge Durango SUVs went out of production in late 2008 just a few short months after they went into production.

Instead, Chrysler is pursuing a variety of fuel-saving technologies with Fiat. Fiat, which has been a leader in high-pressure diesel engine technology in Europe, is bringing its latest gasoline engine know-how to North America.

Fiat's 1.4-liter Fire engine will make its North American vehicle debut when the Fiat 500 minicar arrives here late this year. The MultiAir system improves fuel economy and reduces carbon emissions.

Fiat also is a leader in compressed natural gas, and Chrysler can tap into that, Cappa said. Fiat sold about 200,000 compressed natural gas cars and commercial vehicles in Europe last year.

The only all-electric vehicle now in Chrysler's plan is an electric Fiat 500, due to arrive in 2012. Chrysler is designing the powertrain for the Fiat electric and will remain the center of competence for electrics and hybrids.

Chrysler does plan a test fleet of 140 Ram hybrid pickups in 2011

(Source: [Automotive News](#))