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TOYOTA UNVEILS FT-CH: A DEDICATED COMPACT HYBRID CONCEPT

- New compact Yaris-sized hybrid concept
- Styled in Europe
- Commitment to launch eight new hybrid models*

DETROIT - Toyota today unveiled the FT-CH dedicated hybrid concept at the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit. The FT-CH is a concept that meets Toyota's strategy to offer a wider variety of full hybrid choices to its customers, in addition to the introduction of plug-in hybrids (PHVs) and battery electrics (EVs) in model year 2012, and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles (FCHVs) in 2015 in global markets.

The CH stands for compact hybrid as in compact class and it's a concept that can best be defined by comparing it with the mid-size class Prius. The FT-CH captures the spirit and functionality of a car that thrives in the inner-city environment; sized right to be nimble, responsive and maneuverable.

The FT-CH was styled at Toyota's European Design and Development (ED²) centre in Nice, France. Compared to Prius, it is 22 inches shorter in overall length, yet loses less than an inch in overall width. In spite of its compact external dimensions, FT-CH was designed for maximum passenger comfort and interior roominess, with an imaginative sense of style.

ED² designers looked to capture the vivid, high-energy appeal of what has come to be called the 8-bit generation. Popularized in the early 80's, 8-bit microprocessor technology dominated the budding home video game industry. Today, 8-bit is considered a specific retro-style that is embraced by such things as 8-bit genre music and 8-bit inspired art.

The direct reference to the 8-bit generation is meant to be fun and innovative, colourful and stylish, with strong appeal to young buyers. Lighter in weight and even more fuel efficient than Prius, the concept specifically targets a lower price point than Prius, thus appealing to a younger, less-affluent buyer demographic.

In the early 2010s, Toyota plans to sell a million hybrids per year globally, a majority of those in North America. To accomplish this, Toyota will launch eight all new hybrid models in the USA over the next few years*. These will not include next generation versions of current hybrids; instead, they will be all new dedicated hybrid vehicles, or all new hybrid versions of existing petrol engine models.

Toyota also plans to introduce plug-in hybrids (PHVs) and battery electrics (EVs) to global markets in 2012, and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles (FCHVs) in 2015.

To demonstrate these technologies, the Toyota stand at Detroit will also feature the Prius PHV, FCHV-advanced fuel cell vehicle and FT-EV II electric concept.

For the last decade Toyota's focus has been to concentrate on a comprehensive advanced technology strategy including EVs, PHVs, and FCHVs. Common to all three is the move to electrification, the full commitment to advanced battery technology and how lessons learned from conventional hybrid R&D have given Toyota a leg-up on all three.

* Eight new hybrid models to be introduced into USA market

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