

## In the zone

*An electric car that really works.*

AMID the hype about electric cars, one problem remains: their price. General Motors' Volt, for instance, will cost \$41,000, even after generous subsidies. It therefore remains an option more for early adopters than for normal motorists. Specialist vehicles such as the 200kph (125mph) Tesla Roadster are even more expensive.

Partly, this is the result of a desire by carmakers to create electric vehicles that match the standards of petrol-driven ones. Increasing their speed and range to do so, though, is costly and in most cases the technology is not really quite there yet. The Volt, for example, has an additional petrol-powered generator to run the car when the battery's 65km (40 mile) range has been exceeded.



One South Korean firm, however, is taking a different tack. CT&T, whose main line of business until now has been making electric golf carts, is producing a range of battery-powered cars more suited to low-speed, short-distance urban driving than to cruising the freeways of the American West. Its flagship model, the eZone, is a quirky two-seater aimed at housewives, the elderly and those making the daily school run. It has a range of 100km and can clip along at 70kph if you really put your foot down.

It is a proper car, though. In particular, it is the only low-speed electric car to have passed international front and side crash tests, meaning that it can go on general sale. That will happen in Europe any day now, with a starting price between \$8,000 and \$16,000, and CT&T has plans to introduce the eZone into Hawaii (one part of the United States where journeys are, by definition, short) in two years' time, when a local factory is up and running. It is also cheap to run. The firm claims that 1,500km of urban driving—about a month's worth—will cost a mere \$7 in electricity bills.

To obtain the full 100km between charges it is necessary to buy the version that runs on lithium-polymer batteries. A version that uses cheaper lead-acid ones, which manages half of that, is also available for real skinflints. This may not sound much, but CT&T claims that the

average urban driver travels a mere 40-50km a day, so for that sort of usage buyers of even the lead-acid model should be able to make it home for an overnight recharge.

Critics of electric cars frequently argue that their viability depends on government subsidies. Not so the eZone. CT&T's use of simple, existing technology, as well as its country of origin—the South Korean government has shown a distinct lack of interest in handing out cash to electric-car drivers—means it is an exception which overthrows the rule.

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