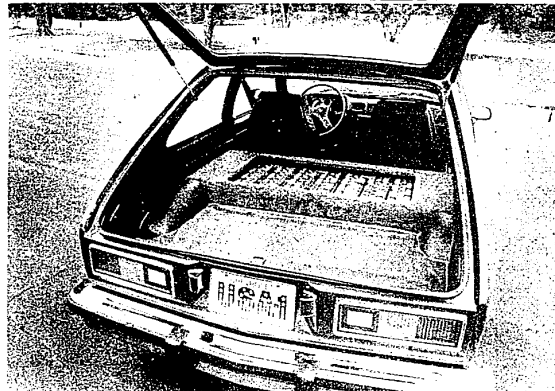




Batteries replace the back seat of this converted Chevette, renamed the Electrovette.

Battery-powered car moves one step closer

Another step toward a mass-produced electric automobile for city use was made this week. General Motors announced the development of a zinc-nickel oxide battery that can store up to 2 1/2 times as much energy as a conventional lead-acid battery.

The zinc-nickel oxide battery was displayed in a Chevette, which had the back seat replaced with batteries.

Although the zinc-nickel oxide battery has been around for 80 years, it has not been practical for use in a passenger automobile. Battery life would have been too short because automobile batteries would have to be recharged almost every day.

"What our people have done is make major progress in improving components in the battery, so that the plates in it do not deteriorate and lose capacity and power after relatively few recharges," said E.M. Estes, GM president.

The first mass-produced electric vehicle will be either a small car for urban and commuter use or a delivery van for use in the city.

"Whichever it is, it will be a specially designed, specific-purpose vehicle for relatively short trips and for use within certain local areas," Estes said.

The electric vehicle will have a top speed of 50 miles per hour, a range of 100 miles and a battery life of 30,000 miles, he said.

Electric cars are not being designed to operate long distances. They are being designed to make the most of two advantages:

Electrically powered cars and trucks create no

local pollution, which is especially important in dense urban areas.

Electrically powered vehicles do not require petroleum fuels. They operate on the power produced at an electric utility power station or, perhaps in the future, at a home power station.

"The electric vehicle will help take some of the pressure off petroleum only if we generate electricity with coal, nuclear power or hydropower. If we're going to generate electricity with petroleum, electric vehicles won't help with the country's energy problems."

Although the new battery system offers advantages, an electric vehicle can not be judged by the same standards as the long developed internal combustion powered car, he said.

"You can't really compare the cost of operating a gasoline car vs the cost of operating an electric by just measuring the electricity and the gasoline that go into them."

In the case of the battery, you also have to figure the cost of the electricity, because at some point, they — unlike your conventional automobile engine — will have to be replaced well before the vehicle is no longer usable, he said.

"Right now, when we look at the cost of operating an electric car with zinc-nickel oxide batteries, it comes out higher than, say, a gasoline-powered Chevette. But by the time we're ready to bring electricity to market, we hope they will be competitive on both initial purchase and operating costs."

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PLYMOUTH 1974 Fury, air, automatic, power steering, power brakes, 12515 SOUTHFIELD DODGE TEL TWELVE 354-0159

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