

We've always had a sweet spot for the original Chevy Trax, one of three microcar concepts shown at the 2007 New York Auto Show (see near upper right). One went into production, as the Chevy Spark, while the Trax name came to life, but as a Chevrolet relative of the tiny Buick Encore (far upper right) from 2013 to 2022. (More info below).

The concepts were quite outlandish at a time when you could still buy big land yacht sedans, but an era of quirky and often very cool little vehicles then joined the marketplace for a number of years. Fuel economy technologies and consumer tastes have rolled forward, though, and after a year off, Trax moves to generation two for 2024, becoming far more conventional in styling and size.

Chev currently has nine utilities, including the

2023 Bolt EV and Bolt EUV (which are on their way out) and the new Trax, already a 2024. The Bolts have been the smallest, but as EVs not the cheapest. The rest are Trax, Trailblazer, Equinox, Blazer, Traverse, Tahoe and Suburban. Blazer is much as Trax has become—the name reborn, but without much of the character of its forebears. Trax through Traverse largely form a tight stairstep of similars from about \$20 to \$35 grand (with Tahoe-Suburban, already in a world of their own, in the \$50s), with even some price range overlap among them.

The microcar concept may be lost, but much is gained. The gen-two Trax is 11 inches longer, two inches wider, has nearly six more cubic feet of cargo space and provides three inches more rear legroom. The only thing smaller is its engine, down

from a former 155-hp 1.4-liter four-cylinder.

With a 137-hp 1.2-liter Ecotec turbo-three, Trax is not the most powerful thing you can buy, and it's front-drive only, with a conventional six-speed automatic. But at 32 mpg highway, with five trims from just \$20,400 to \$23,900 tops, this little guy is likely to be a big hit. (Our top-trim ACTIV with significant add-ons was still under \$26 grand.)

Despite its horsepower and absence of any sort of hybrid electrification, the Trax seems to have a strong power curve. We gave it full pedal on a freeway ramp, thinking it would need it, and it was a rocket. Nice. We had noted front-drive torque at first, but not so much once acclimated. We would welcome an AWD version, as the prior generation had. Perhaps they had a mission to keep the entire



lineup under \$25,000. Or they may be watching its weight, as Trax is now already over 4,000 pounds, about 1,000 heavier than gen two (though AWD added only about 150 pounds and dropped just a point or two of mpg on the prior). Its simple torsion beam rear suspension (firm, even a little harsh) could also be a factor. Whatever the reason, AWD availability in the future seems likely.

But you get what you pay for and then some, by

a long shot—this little SUV is a tremendous bargain. It still fulfills its mission of economy and value, even relative size to a less radical degree than before. The new Trax is in line with the times, and it still falls into the lineup exactly where it did before, just more conventionally. And all this together is exactly what defines such evolutions. Compared to the original, there is some personal-ity lost. But much is gained. ■

CHEVROLET MICROCAR SHORT COURSE: The 2007 Chevy Beat, Groove and Trax US concepts have different origins and production histories around the globe. Beat came to market here as Chevy Spark, but had originated as a smaller European Matiz. The Groove (its concept arguably more like HHR in styling) has its name now in production, more recently applied to a small utility from China, also sold in Latin America and the Middle East. The Trax name in the US was applied to a near-twin of the tiny (for here) Buick Encore, before its other evolutions as covered additionally above.

Fresh tracks

Something lost, something gained

BY JOE SAGE



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Changwon, Korea
CONTENT	55% South Korea / 21% Mexico / 3% US/Canada
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION	Mexico / S Korea
ENGINE	1.2L Ecotec 3-cylinder turbo, dir inject DOHC, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE	137 hp / 162 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	Hydra-Matic 6T40 6-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut w coil-over spring, direct-acting stblzr bar; R: compound crank (torsion beam), coils, twin-tube shocks
STEERING	column-mount elec pwr asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	tbd
WHEELS	18-in gloss black aluminum
TIRES	225/55 R18 SL
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	178.6 / 106.3
GROUND CLEARANCE	7.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	tbd
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.6 / 38.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.9 / 38.7 in
CARGO CAPACITY	25.6 / 54.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	4145 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	tbd / tbd
MPG	28/32/30 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$23,900
PAINT: Cayenne Orange	395
SUNROOF PKG: power sliding glass sunroof with manual shade	895
DRIVER CONFIDENCE PKG: lane change alert w side blind zone alert, rear cross traffic alert	650
DESTINATION CHARGE	1095
TOTAL	\$26,935

2024 CHEVROLET TRAX LINEUP

LS	\$20,400
1RS	22,100
LT	22,300
2RS	23,900
ACTIV	23,900

