Toyota’s Tacoma X-Runner Concept Envisions a Sport Truck Resurgence

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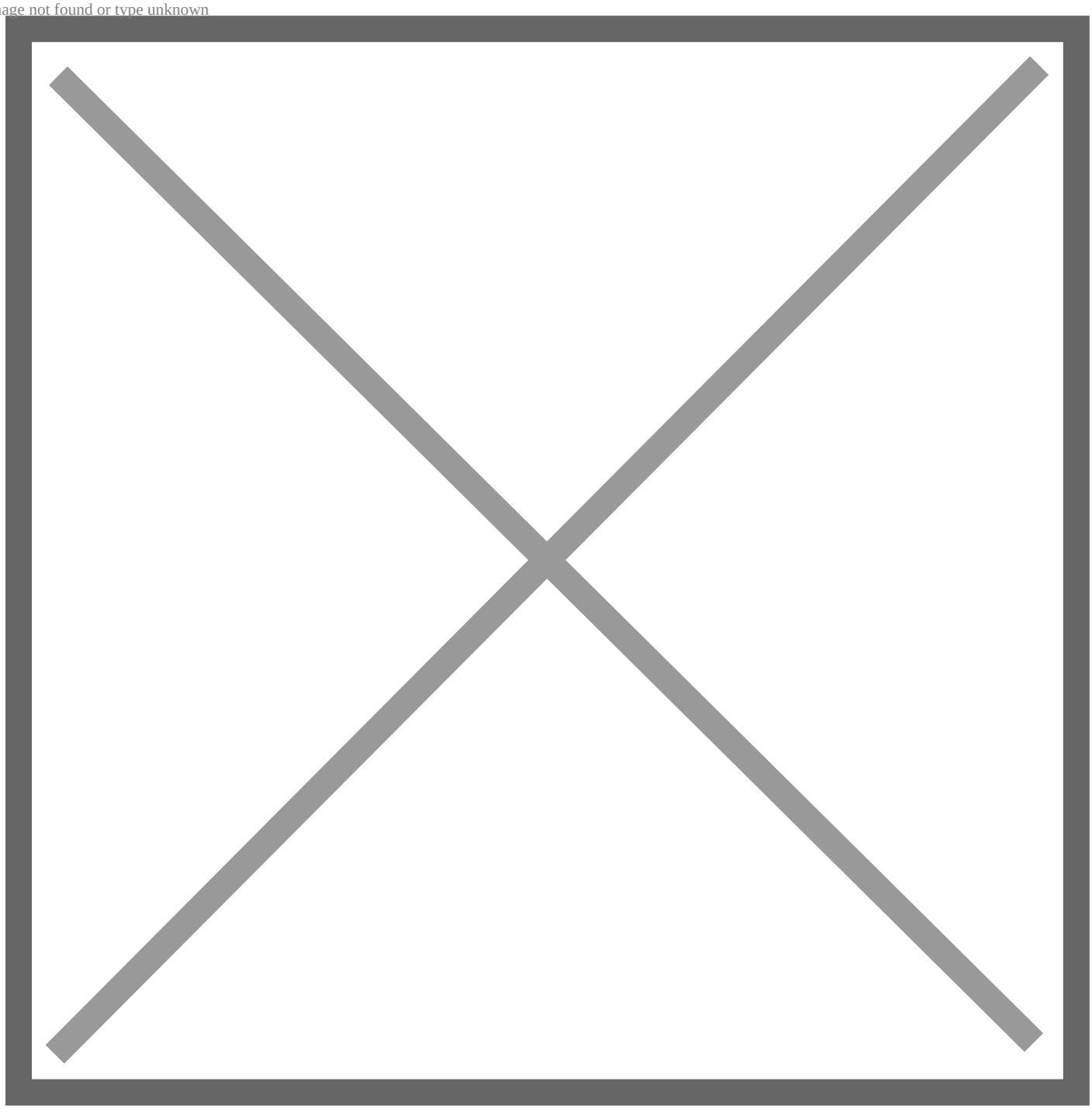

LAS VEGAS (Oct. 31, 2023) – At one time, 2WD street or "sport" trucks made their presence known on roads everywhere. Lowered, fast and tuned by enthusiasts who focused on performance between stoplights instead of worksites, campsites or trailheads.

A concepting session between the Toyota Engineering teams at Toyota R&D and design team at Toyota's famous Calty Design Studio in Ann Arbor, Michigan, resulted in a divergence from the off-road focus at the 2023 SEMA Show. The brainstorming sessions pointed to a street truck build, a modernized X-Runner Concept, based on the all-new 2024 Toyota Tacoma.

When asked about the inspiration behind building an X-Runner Concept for the SEMA Show, Adam Rabinowitz, chief designer at Toyota's Calty Design Research, Inc. shared a part of the team's thought process. "There were lots of street trucks in the early 2000s and they all faded, so on the one hand, this was a curiosity check to see if there is *any* market for street trucks at all, or if the market has entirely shifted to what we see today—tough, rugged, lifted vehicles," Rabinowitz said.

But there was more behind the build of this X-Runner Concept than just a customer pulse check. Inspired by the incredible consumer enthusiasm at the launch of the new 2024 Tacoma, Toyota R&D and Design Teams were excited to illustrate the possibilities of Toyota's new TGNA-F product platform.

"On the heels of the Tacoma launch, we wanted to showcase the diverse possibilities of the new truck's architecture, "said Sheldon Brown, chief engineer, Toyota Motor North America. "The TGNA-F platform allows us to efficiently build something this cool in a fraction of the development time it would normally take. A project like this is why you get into the automotive business," Brown said.

The X-Runner Concept benefits from a modified i-FORCE 3.4-liter twin-turbocharged V6 producing 421 horsepower with 479 lb-ft of peak torque. A Tundra solid axle with 4.30:1 final drive and an electronic locking differential splits the torque to the rear wheels, while a custom side exhaust exits just below the rocker panel.

It is worth noting that the engine modification will be available next year beginning with new Tundra models as part of a TRD Performance Package upgrade. Check out the Performance Package press release for more details.

To support the chassis modifications and engine, the overall track width was increased by just over 3 inches and the frame was strengthened. When it came to styling, the team made a point to maintain the Tacoma's design language, including the use of interlocking shapes and fluid forms central to its "chiseled liquid" DNA. The concept's aggressive front fascia is completed with Tacoma XB LED Projector headlights with "X-Runner" laser ablation lenses. Front and side body work features custom aero-fairings with functional venting that cools X-Runner's 13.9-inch Tundra front brakes, providing higher heat capacity. The functional hood scoop is purpose-built as well, drawing cool air into the engine bay. From the back, X-Runner is purposefully simple, its look punctuated by smoked taillights.

To achieve a proper street stance and further demonstrate the TGNA-F platform flexibility, the team sourced a Tundra air-suspension to attain the lowest possible ride height while still carrying a load. Up front, the upper and lower arms were lengthened to match the Tundra's suspension geometry. The lower arm was customized with the slammed nature of the vehicle in mind. At the rear, the upper and lower arm lengths were also increased to mate with Tundra's rear axle housing, axle shafts and bearings, matching the width and strength of the front end. To enhance Tacoma's already impressive on-road driving dynamics, its springs were stiffened, optimizing performance with a set of custom-valved, 2.5-inch Bilstein® aluminum bodied shocks with remote reservoirs at each corner to help the driver put all 421 horsepower to the ground. Finally, the wheel wells were filled with Lacks Enterprises®, one-off, 21×9.5-inch carbon fiber wheels with forged aluminum centers on Michelin 285/45R21 Sport Tires.

Most of the body was sprayed in the original Speedway Blue color as a subtle nod to the original X-Runner that debuted the distinctive hue when it was introduced at the 2004 Chicago Auto Show. A matte black finish on the hood, A-pillars and roof take cues from the TRD Pro style guide, while red accents complementing the hood lines, scoop and wheel hubs signal that this is a high-performance street machine.

Inside, the X-Runner retains its Tacoma feel while blending seamlessly into its reimagined, performance aesthetic by featuring paddle shifters, and custom X-Runner accents.

“There is a Tacoma for everyone, with eight grades in the 2024 Tacoma lineup,” said Mike Tripp, group vice president, Toyota Marketing. “This new X-Runner concept really shows that TRD is about performance, about going fast… It shows the range of the platform and what we could do if we took the Tacoma beyond off-road and everyday capabilities, slammed it, and gave it a little street cred,” Tripp said.

Toyota’s featured vehicles and build concepts and a variety of production cars, SUVs, and trucks are on display at the Las Vegas Convention Center Oct 31 – November 3, 2023, continuing the company’s mission to provide thrilling performance whether on road, on track or on trail.

Vehicles shown are special project prototype vehicles, modified with parts and/or accessories not available from Toyota that may void the vehicle’s warranty, may negatively impact vehicle performance and safety, and may not be street legal.