Toyota Research Institute Delivers Silicon Valley Community a Hands-On Experience of Future Mobility

March 16, 2017

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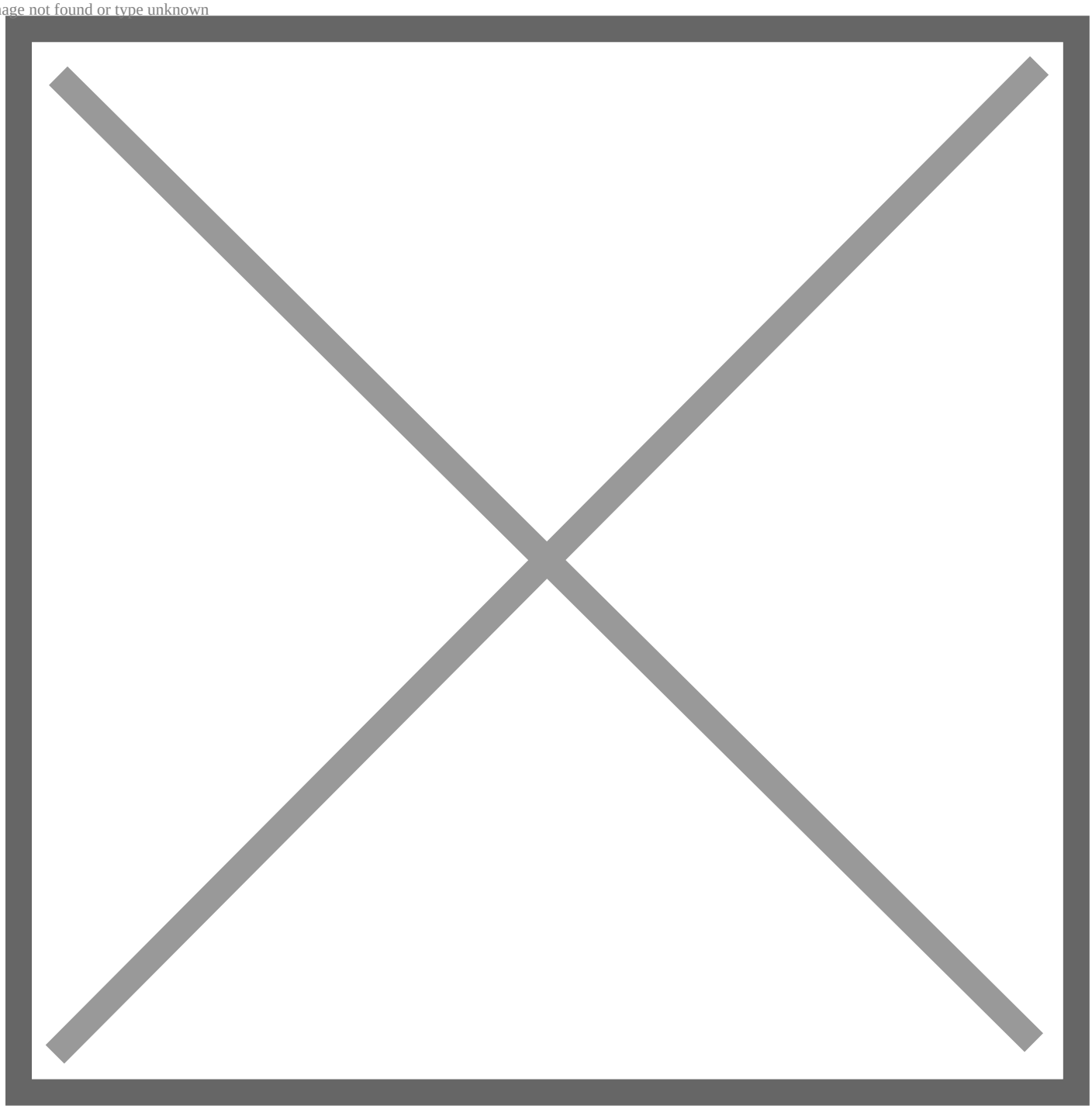

Los Altos, Calif. March 7, 2017 – What is it like to compete in a car race that isn't about speed, but rather fuel efficiency?

As more than 100 people found out on March 3 at the Sonoma Raceway: really fun.

A broad cross-section of the Silicon Valley community participated in Toyota Onramp 2017, an annual event hosted by Toyota Research Institute (TRI). The cornerstone of the event was the Prius Challenge, where the teams competed to see how efficiently they could drive nine laps at Sonoma Raceway. The competition also featured a special guest, Toyota Chairman of the Board Takeshi Uchiyamada. Chairman Uchiyamada is considered the father of the Prius as he was the Chief Engineer of the first generation Prius.

"TRI's mission is to improve the quality of life by making use of AI technology. AI can not only improve safety and enhance mobility, but it can also help reduce traffic and time behind the wheel while enhancing fuel efficiency, which is a major theme of Prius Challenge," said Dr. Gill Pratt, TRI CEO.

In order to facilitate preparation and strategizing for the competition, participants were given access to a driving simulator built by Open Source Robotics Foundation and a strategy editor from Hyperdrive. During the race, teams used a proprietary coaching app to help evaluate and adjust their driving performance in real time to achieve the best fuel economy. Four teams were recognized for their efforts and presented with awards in the following categories — highest overall MPG, best use of machine learning, highest single lap MPG and best race strategy.

Team EcoFlow walked away as the overall Prius Challenge winner, achieving 85 MPG over nine laps.

In addition to the Prius Challenge, Onramp 2017 included the following highlights: an Executive Roundtable discussion with media, the first public reveal of a TRI-developed research vehicle, and rare and exciting driving experiences for participants.

The roundtable featured Chairman Uchiyamada , Dr. Gill Pratt, Dr. James Kuffner, CTO; Dr. Ryan Eustice, Vice President of Autonomous Driving; Mr. Chris Ballinger, CFO and Director of Mobility Services. Earlier in the day, TRI displayed its new advanced safety research vehicle for the first time. The all-new test mule is the next step in Toyota's 12 years of autonomous technology research and development in the United States, and will be used to explore a full range of autonomous driving capabilities. Participants also had the chance to join a professional driver for a high-speed lap around the track in a Lexus high performance vehicle. The Toyota i-Road, a three-wheel electric concept vehicle, was brought to the Onramp event again to immerse participants fully into its unique driving experiences.

For more information on TRI, please follow @ToyotaResearch on Twitter or visit our **website**.