

Full Details of Toyota's Ultimate Utility Vehicle Revealed

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TORRANCE, Calif., Nov. 3, 2015—The **Toyota Ultimate Utility Vehicle**—teased to the press in June when it began its journey on the **Ever-Better Expedition**—has made its long-awaited debut at Toyota’s **2015 Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) Show** booth.

The one-of-a-kind concept vehicle, which takes the spacious body of a Toyota Sienna minivan and mates it to a rugged Toyota Tacoma 4×4 frame, will serve as the command center for the North American leg of the expedition, a convoy of nine Toyota vehicles that are being driven over 16,500 miles through the continent’s most extreme driving conditions.

Because it is the operational hub of this grueling endurance test, the UUV is the most technologically sophisticated of connected cars. Among the fully functional equipment inside the UUV: a TracVision mobile satellite television receiver; Wi-Fi; Internet access; multiple USB ports; 17-inch monitor; 60-inch Sony LED TV; 2,500-watt JBL audio system; and a Flir M-324xp night vision camera system with high-definition recording capability.

From captain’s chairs equipped with laptop tray tables in the back of the Ultimate Utility Vehicle, Toyota engineers can monitor driving data from every vehicle in real time; record video of vehicle handling and braking, day or night; and report back to Toyota headquarters on the cars’ performance via Skype.

The UUV uses a Sienna minivan body because it offers the most interior space for the array of electronic equipment housed inside the vehicle. But even the durable Sienna is not designed for the challenging off-road adventures the Ever-Better Expedition vehicles face. So its unibody structure was hollowed out, reinforced, and mated to a similarly reinforced Tacoma four-wheel-drive frame.

For outstanding ground clearance and approach and departure angles, the UUV has been equipped with an Engaged four-link long-travel suspension that gives a four-inch lift in ride height. 33×22 Nitto Mud Grappler tires mounted on 22×12-inch Monster Energy 539B off-road wheels get power to the ground on and off road. The UUV boasts an amazing 15.75 inches of wheel travel to conquer virtually any type of terrain it may encounter.

The size of the tires hampered operation of the stock Sienna’s sliding rear doors and front-hinged front doors. So the rear doors were reengineered and motorized to slide out, rather than back, to offer access to the cavernous passenger compartment. And the front doors were redesigned to open from the front, “suicide”-style, for ease of entry and exit without compromising the UUV’s off-road prowess.

From behind the wheel, operating the Ultimate Utility Vehicle seems identical to driving a stock Sienna. But, while the levers and buttons appear to be the same OEM equipment you’d find in a production Sienna, they are actually carefully crafted replicas which control the functions of the Tacoma pickup on which the UUV is based.

The Ever-Better Expedition has already completed the hot-weather portion of its North American leg. After the SEMA Show, when the weather turns rigid and icy in Canada and Alaska, the rigorous journey will continue—and the Ultimate Utility Vehicle will be at the center of it all.

The Ultimate Utility Vehicle—along with numerous other Toyota specialty vehicles—will be found in the Toyota display booth (#24700) in Central Hall and on the Patio Annex of the Las Vegas Convention Center, November 3-6, 2015.