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DaimlerChrysler's EPIC Minivan is Tops in Customer Acceptability in Electric Vehicle Road Rally

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DaimlerChrysler's EPIC electric minivan took top honors for customer acceptability among production vehicles in the recent American Tour de Sol.

It was the second consecutive year that the EPIC was rated tops for customer acceptability in the annual road rally for electric and advanced technology vehicles. The EPIC also took first place in the production minivan category. The American Tour del Sol is sponsored by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

In the customer acceptability category, vehicles were rated on attributes such as ease of access, comfort, ergonomics of control panel and displays, safety features, cost of maintenance, ease of recharging, styling and driving pleasure.

Two EPIC's (Electric Powered Interurban Commuter) were among the 50 competitors in the Tour del Sol, which ran a 250-mile route from New York City to Washington, D.C.

Competitors ranged from production vehicles, such as the EPIC, Honda's hybrid vehicle, the Insight and General Motors' EVI, to one-of-a-kind vehicles designed and built by high school and college students. The EPICs were driven by students from Lawrence Technology University in Southfield, Michigan.

The EPIC has a range of about 90 miles on a full charge and provides the performance, the utility and the customer amenities of its gasoline-powered counterpart, the Dodge Caravan. More than 200 EPICs are on the road in California and New York State. Major users are the U.S. Postal Service and Xpress Shuttle service at Los Angeles World Airport. The vehicle's unique fast charge capability enables users to recharge the vehicle in about 30 minutes, increasing its daily range. In one recent test, an EPIC using fast charge technology logged more than 350 miles in one 10-hour period.

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