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Taxi to show its stuff

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Design Trust will exhibit innovative taxicabs during the New York Auto Show next week

By **JOSEPH SZCZESNY**
Of The Oakland Press

An Oakland company will get the red-carpet treatment in New York next week when it rolls out its redesigned taxi cab.

The Design Trust for Public Spaces, with support from the City of New York, is holding an exhibition of innovative taxi prototypes during the New York Auto Show.

Standard Taxi, built by Troybased Vehicle Production Group, is expected to be one of the central exhibits. "This is a big deal because the Standard Taxi is wheelchair accessible," said Wendy Parson, spokeswoman for the Design Trust for Public Spaces.

"Stepping off the curb and hailing a cab is the quintessential New York act, symbolizing the power and freedom of our city," said Deborah Marton, executive director of the Design Trust.

"We're excited to join with the New York Auto Show and others to bring sustainable mobility, access for all and good design to the New York City taxi," she said.

Marc Klein, founder of the Troybased Vehicle Production Group, which has built the taxi,



Troy's Vehicle Production Group makes the Standard Taxi, which carries four and is fully accessible. It will be at the New York Auto Show next week. -File photo

said the Standard Taxi could fill a niche left vacant when the old Checker Motor Co. of Kalamazoo ceased production more than 20 years ago.

The taxis now used in New York and elsewhere were never designed to serve as cabs, he said.

The Standard Taxi was built from the ground up to serve only as a cab, Klein said after the cab appeared in a taxi-only show in Seattle.

The New York Auto Show will be the general public's first exposure to the Standard Taxi, Parsons said.

Dave Bjerke of Triad Engineering in Madison Heights, which built the prototype Standard Taxi, said engineers from his firm used extensive input from the taxicab industry across North America.

Throughout development, the emphasis was on passenger comfort, safety and accessibility as well as low-cost maintenance, Bjerke said.

The vehicle has seating positions for four passengers in the rear compartment.

"That way, two couples can go out to dinner in one cab," he said. Additional space inside the cabin ensures that the Standard Taxi meets requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Canadian Standards Association.

Disabled passengers can easily enter the taxi by stepping inside the vehicle or by using a standard recessed access ramp, Bjerke said.

The Standard Taxi was financed by Andlinger & Co. Inc., a private equity and venture capital firm based in Tarrytown, N.Y.

It was designed with anti-lock brakes, a strong frame and body structure, energyabsorbing bumpers and an extra-large trunk with room for four hard-case golf bags and a full-size spare tire. Parsons said other taxi prototypes will be on display along with the Standard Taxi. Among them are the Kia Rondo Taxi, a taxi powered by lithium-batteries from Hybrid Technologies and a Ford Crown Victoria equipped with 1,000 horsepower engine that runs on hydrogen. In addition, scale models and component prototypes from leading design schools, also will be on display, Parsons said. The schools include the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and the Art Center College of Pasadena, Calif.

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