



Terabyte Triangle

Spokane, Washington

Nothing matters more than bandwidth...

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## The Tango --- A Car to Love

01/31/2003 , by **Billie Moreland**

Every so often, a new product is introduced that resonates. Lust surfaces and without that product, life will just not seem fulfilled. The Tango does that for me. It's an electric car, designed to hold one or two people, for use by commuters. It's small. It's cute. It wraps around you like a glove. It goes from zero to 60 in under four seconds and its top speed is 130 mph. The Tango is an ultra-narrow, high-performance, stable, safe car that fits in the space of a motorcycle. Its range is 80 miles.

Driving the Tango is simplicity personified --- just go and stop. There is no gearshift. The concept of gears as a way to change rotation rate is replaced by electronics. The usual levers for lights, turn signals, windshield wipers, etc. are in the usual places. Instead of a cockpit full of dials and indicators, the Tango has one high-tech screen --- the same screen used in formula racecars. Controls for the sound system, heating and air conditioning are simple and easy to use. There is even a cup holder. At the end of the day, just plug it into an outlet like that for an electric dryer, and it will completely recharge in three hours.

The commuter car is the brainchild of Rick Woodbury, President of Commuter Cars Corporation in the Terabyte Triangle at 715 E Sprague. The idea formed twenty years ago while Woodbury was stopped in traffic on a Los Angeles freeway, and he noticed that all of the cars around him had only one occupant. Having a car just the right size for a single commuter that would take up half the space seemed an obvious and desirable solution --- followed by thoughts of clean electric power. Four years ago, the first commuter car was finally under prototype construction. "We do things slowly and carefully," explains Woodbury. A patent was issued in December 2001.

Woodbury was not educated as an automobile designer or engineer, but he has a long history and experience in auto racing, mechanics, and sales. The team includes his son, Bryan Woodbury, who majored in Physics at EWU, and some of the best engineers and designers in the industry. Woodbury's knowledge of racing and the safety elements used has heavily influenced the design of the Tango. According to Woodbury, the Tango is probably the safest car being produced for street use.

The Tango has an all-around protective roll cage made of the same steel tubing used in NASCAR cages. This is exactly the same protective cage that allows racecar drivers to walk away from horrendous crashes. The door latches are heavy duty and designed not to pop open in an accident. The seat belt is the same harness used by jet pilots. Because the driver is in the exact middle of the car, perspective and visibility are much better than for left-hand driver seats. You know exactly where you are. Eleven hundred pounds of batteries just 4 inches off the ground help the Tango hug the road --- contributing to the kind of high-performance handling usually associated with Porsche, Lamborghini, and Ferrari.

The Tango's engineering includes many of the best elements used in electric vehicle drag racing. It uses the most advanced battery charging and managing system along with a 2,000 amp Zilla controller. The Zilla has

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powered the three quickest vehicles in the three quickest classes of electric drag racing. All of the Tango's current specifications can be found at <http://www.commutercars.com>. The information given includes all technical specifications, plus the cost per mile, acceleration statistics, and top speed information.

In California lane splitting, straddling the dotted line to pass slow or stopped traffic, is legal and considered safe for motorcycles. The Tango is 5 inches narrower than a Honda Goldwing motorcycle and less than half the size of the average car, so it could follow the same strategy as for a motorcycle. Lane doubling, meaning putting 2 staggered rows of Tangos and motorcycles in one lane, would double the capacity of the existing freeway system. In addition, the small size of the Tango would allow as many as four cars to be parked in one standard parallel parking space just by parking them perpendicular to the curb, and you can even park between other parked cars.

The first Tangos will be sold as kits that may require eight hours of easy additional assembly. These kit cars are luscious and expensive --- cost ranges between \$40-80,000. They contain hand-sewn leather upholstery, a Le Mans style dash, a Nakamichi CD700 sound system, instant heat and climate control air conditioning, a Ferrari red exterior, and the promise of leaving the Dodge Viper in the dust. The price will lower with full production.

The Tango prototype was manufactured mostly in Quebec, but Woodbury says that all the resources are available in the Inland Northwest to manufacture the commuter car. "All we need is money," says Woodbury. The investment needed to complete the government required crash tests, tools, and training approaches \$24 million. Of that, half is for the tests. Support and assistance have been strong in Spokane, and a Seattle based group has submitted a proposal to build the first kit cars.

For the Woodburys, creating a safe, clean, congestion easing commuter car is just one chink in a higher goal. "I believe in setting extremely high goals, and then working toward them," says Woodbury. "A worthy and high goal is to end global famine and to work toward that -- the Tango is just one contribution." As a Buddhist, Woodbury believes a person's actions should match their words, and if one follows that precept, they can change the world for the better.

For more information about the Tango, go to: <http://www.commutercars.com>.

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