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2014 Mercedes-Benz B-class Electric Drive
Think of it as a fully electric shopping cart for Rodeo Drive.

MARCH 2013 | BY ALEXANDER STOKLOSA | [MULTIPLE PHOTOGRAPHERS](#)

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As electric vehicles have begun trickling onto the market in greater numbers, it seems automakers face two routes when it comes to whipping up a gas-free ride. The first is to create an EV from scratch—see the [Tesla Model S](#) and Nissan Leaf—and the second is to retrofit an existing model with an electric powertrain, as with the [Ford Focus Electric](#), [Mitsubishi i-MiEV](#), and [Toyota RAV4 EV](#). Mercedes-Benz has decided that for the U.S. market it will follow the latter proposition, and is bringing the European B-class here equipped with an electric powertrain to be the first Electric Drive vehicle to wear the tri-pointed star.

The 2014 B-class Electric Drive makes its debut at the 2013 New York auto show, and joins the [Smart Fortwo Electric Drive](#) as the only other EV sold by Daimler in this country. Interestingly, Mercedes chose not to fit one of its current U.S. models with an Electric Drive setup and **instead turned to the B-class**, a compact people mover until now sold exclusively in Europe. The move mirrors the one made by Ford in bringing its nearly identically sized C-Max to our shores, but only in alternatively propelled **hybrid** and **Energi plug-in hybrid** forms.

This Ain't No SLS AMG E-Cell

Also like Ford's C-Max hybrids, the B-class Electric Drive is essentially shaped like a jelly bean, albeit one with upscale detailing and nice surface sculpting. It's not exactly dorky looking, but it's also not sexy like the Tesla Model S or [Benz's upcoming SLS AMG E-cell](#). The interior is quite nice, with chrome-ringed air vents and what appear to be lush materials covering every surface. The B-class seats five, and it's tall, so space shouldn't be much of an issue. Other than a few tweaks to the gauge-cluster display screen to show charge and energy-flow data, the Electric Drive's cabin is otherwise identical to that of the gas- or diesel-fed B-classes that won't make it to America.



The Electric Drive's lithium-ion battery pack is mounted beneath the floor in a cavity ahead of the rear axle, and thus doesn't intrude on passenger or cargo space. Mercedes claims the 28-kWh pack is good for 115 miles of range, a bit lower than what Benz predicted for the **B-class Electric Drive concept** (125 miles) that previewed this production model. At least the electric motor's specs carried over unchanged—buyers can look forward to “at least” 134 horsepower and 228 lb-ft of torque, which Benz estimates will be good for a sub-10-second 0–60 time. It might be slow, but as we found in our **B-class first drive**, the little runabout is pretty fun to drive, and it shares its basic architecture with the A- and CLA-class compacts.

As for charging times, the lithium-ion battery can be replenished enough for 60 miles of range in less than two hours via a 240-volt power connection; Mercedes hasn't specified how long it will take to top off the B-class via a normal, 110-volt wall outlet. Owners will be able to remotely access vehicle information like charge level and range via a smartphone app or a computer, as well as receive remote vehicle checkups and even pre-heat or pre-cool the car. Other onboard tech includes Benz's radar-based Collision Prevention assist feature, which warns of an impending crash and primes the brakes for the driver; a 5.8-inch dashboard screen; and navigation. A blind-spot monitoring system, lane-keeping assist, and active park assist are available as options.

The 2014 B-class Electric Drive goes on sale here in the U.S. early next year, so final pricing and standard content information is not yet available. Critically, the B-class will carry Mercedes-Benz's EV torch—a final decision on the ultra-fast SLS AMG E-Cell for our market has yet to be made—as it enters the unoccupied luxury electric wagon automotive segment. [View Photo Gallery](#)

2013 NY auto show [VIEW FULL COVERAGE >>](#)

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