’46 Chevy Truck Runs On Prius Power

Pastor Joe Winter fitted his 1946 Chevy truck with a Toyota Prius drive system and now he calls it a Chevyota. The exterior is a classic old farm truck, complete with rust, faded paint and a flat bed. Under the hood, there’s a modern hybrid gas/electric drive.

“I have fun at car shows, rolling up behind someone in electric mode,” says Winter. “When people come up behind me on the road, they know something’s different when they see the muffler extend through the rear differential. When they hear it running in electric mode, they remark how quiet it is. I say it is a hybrid, but they think I’m joking.”

The Chevyota is no joke. Winter originally planned to restore the truck with a 350 Chevy engine. Instead, he decided it would be fun to repower with something really different.

“I traded an old Buick for an ‘02 Toyota Prius and started taking the truck and the car apart,” says Winter.

At first he was going to just set the cab over the Prius chassis and build a short box on the back. But having once used a subframe to attach a Firebird to a 1956 Chevy, he decided to do that instead.

He cut the Prius unibody under the rear passenger seat and added a 3 1/2-in. subframe to the unibody floorpan. He then cut the truck in two just ahead of the cab and overlaid the ends of the 2 frames.

“I ratchet-strapped the unibody to the truck frame, and it looked good,” he recalls. “The Prius just disappeared.”

Then Winter started welding. He reinstalled the computers and systems so he could start it up and drive it around a parking lot. It worked well, so he finished welding the two together with some structural support from mild steel tubing welded to both frames.

“The truck frame was heavy, and the Prius frame was thin, but it was really good quality steel,” he notes.

The beauty of where he joined the two meant that no changes were needed to the Prius’ front-wheel drive, engine or electrical system. The high-voltage battery system replaced the truck’s fuel tank beneath the seat. The Prius fuel tank was relocated between the frame rails under and behind the cab.

“It uses a very specific type of gas tank, fuel gauge and pump, so I had to retain them,” says Winter.

Since he no longer needed the truck’s rear drive system, it was gutted to reduce weight. He took it apart, cut the axles back and routed the muffler where the differential had been.

Once he had the cab in place, he added 2 steel brackets between the firewalls to add strength and make up for the loss of the A-pillar on the Prius.

Winter was surprised at how well the two frames fit together. He cut the Prius steering column off at the knuckle at the steering box and welded the ’46 Chevy steering shaft to it. It matched up almost perfectly.

Winter moved the Prius gas pedal and brake into the cab and connected their wires to the computer. He even welded the original truck pedal to the Prius brake. It looks like both come up through the original truck floor panel.

The original wiring harness from the Prius was patched into the truck cab and taillights. Otherwise it was stock Prius.

Winter admits to a large belly and needing more room, so he substituted a steering wheel from an old go-cart for the truck steering wheel. He also replaced the truck seat with a rear seat from a Chevy Suburban.

“It fit perfectly,” says Winter.

One change he did just for fun was to install a loudspeaker under the hood. “I can make any sound I want come from under the hood,” says Winter. “It plays everything from a ‘hit and miss’ tractor to a locomotive.”

He has no plans to do a full restoration to the truck body. After all, it is his work vehicle, a truck with the ride and fuel economy of a Prius. “I use it daily, except in rain or snow,” says Winter.

From the outside it looks like a classic old farm truck, but this 1946 Chevy truck is fitted with a modern Toyota Prius hybrid gas/electric drive system.

Winter cut the Prius unibody under the rear passenger seat and added a subframe (above). He then cut truck in two ahead of cab and overlaid the ends of the 2 frames. Removing the truck hood (right) reveals the Prius drive system.

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“Side Mount” Cab Heater For Deere Garden Tractor

Larry Moore, Wells, Vt., made an inexpensive cab heater for his Deere 420 garden tractor that lets him work in comfort when clearing snow. The unit takes heat from the tractor’s muffler and shoots it back into the tractor’s plexiglass cab.

“It works so well I wish I’d have thought of it sooner,” says Moore. “I use the tractor to operate a front-mounted snowblower around my driveway and yard. It worked perfect the first time I used it.”

He started by removing the factory muffler and installing a 4-in. dia. muffler off a Cub Cadet tractor inside a 6-in. dia. length of enclosed pipe, which serves as a manifold to catch exhaust heat.

Then he riveted a length of 4-in. dia. pipe at an angle to one side of the manifold. The pipe goes through a hole that he cut into the plexiglass and into the front part of the cab. Heat gathered from around the muffler exits the manifold and goes up through the 4-in. dia. pipe and into the cab. The muffler’s exhaust fumes exit through a 2-in. dia. tailpipe that runs to the back of the tractor.

“It works great. I use the tractor with a snowblower all winter long,” says Moore. “The 4-in. dia. pipe goes through the plexiglass just an inch or two. Some people have asked me if there’s a danger of exhaust getting into the cab. I tell them no, because the only thing going into the cab is heat from the muffler.

“I spring-loaded the elbow coming off the engine so I can pop it off and quickly swing the manifold out of the way in order to access the engine.”

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Heater consists of a 4-in. dia. muffler fitted inside a 6-in. dia. length of pipe. Heat captured from around the muffler is carried back into tractor’s plexiglass cab, while exhaust fumes exit through a 2-in. dia. tailpipe that runs to back of tractor.