

RAM PUTS THE 'YOU' IN UTILITY

BY JOE SAGE

We can conclude right up front that the new Ram ProMaster City is a useful tool in the kit of anyone with logistical or cargo needs. We can also see within about a half-mile of driving that it could be a lot of fun to have even as a daily driver—and there is indeed a five-passenger wagon version of the ProMaster City van. But today we're looking at the Cargo version (in base trim; there is also an SLT for \$1625 more).

The space inside the ProMaster City Cargo van is ready for adaptation to just about any trade need, with structure and attachment points plus a range of Mopar accessories—such as a sliding drawer upfit that extends nearly three feet out the back, for anything from tools to catering goods. If you run out of room inside, an affordable rack system (rails, crossbars, or all of it for \$595) attaches to predrilled fitment points and can carry 154 lb.

In the cab, an overhead shelf system runs full width above the windshield, about five inches high and seven inches deep and with a catch net, good for notebooks, sunglasses, maybe maps if you don't opt for nav. The glovebox is 176.9 cu.in.; a console bin 12 inches wide by 4 inches deep is big enough for a tablet or even a small laptop; and trays, cupholders, two 12-volt outlets, USB and auxiliary ports complete your mobile toolbox.

A healthy handful of options are purposeful and affordable, such as a cargo partition package (solid panel for \$400 or with a window for \$495); a Mopar trailer tow group for \$435; rear window wiper/washer/defroster for \$250; Uconnect 5.0 with nav for \$860 (just \$365 more than our van's non-nav Uconnect unit); a commercial vehicle tracking system for \$540; LED cargo area lighting for \$285; even a Mopar remote start system for \$615.

Ram ProMaster City is a derivative of the Fiat Professional line that has been selling in the millions for a century in Europe before arriving here.

If you haven't noticed yet, you will—decades' worth of big delivery vans in the US are giving way to a new generation of Euro vans large and small (or in some cases midsize). Mercedes-Benz, Ford and Nissan are taking similar paths. Bigger vans are perfect for depot runs or intercity driving, while the small ones feed into the local network of tasks and deliveries.

Small ones like this Ram ProMaster City also work great as a freestanding option for trades and businesses galore. Interior buildouts are highly adaptable, seating is adaptable (up to five), doors and windows are adaptable—draw your own blueprint to solve just about any scenario, and you are still in the game starting in the low \$20s.

This little van claims a number of best-in-class stats: payload (1883 lb), cargo volume (131.7 cu.ft), width between wheel wells (48.4 inches holds a standard pallet), standard engine horsepower and torque, and 2000-lb maximum tow capacity (a tie).

Beyond its obviously purposeful nature, we

Ram ProMaster City's rear doors have two tricks. The righthand door is narrower than the left, about a two-to-one split, allowing a delivery driver to better shield from traffic splashes while optimizing access to the sidewalk—a convenience sure to save time stop after stop. And with the touch of a handy and intuitive release, the doors swing wide, to almost 180 degrees. • We appreciated a great many design details, hitting the perfect balance for a utility vehicle with personality. Side mirrors have style and function you might find on a \$60,000 German sedan. We loved the simplicity of the headlight switch: on or off. • Two notes for improvement: You don't have to be abnormally tall for the top corner of the front doors to pose a hazard. And that 180-swing release can way too easily catch a finger.

found the ProMaster City just a lot of fun to drive. In cargo trim, it is a commercial vehicle, but we found ourselves thinking it has more utility than a sport utility vehicle, and in its own way, more sport—nimble, lightweight, economical and maneuverable—other than its cumbersome 42-foot turning circle. That probably can't be changed much, and we noted few other downsides (we do think a new 15-cent chip could provide a nicer door chime).

Competition is stiff in the commercial van market, as it is in the pickup market, where Ram has been growing by double digits. We could have driven this van indefinitely. ■



RAM PROMASTER CITY CARGO

ENGINE	.....2.4L Tigershark 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	.....178 hp / 174 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....9-speed automatic
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
ACCELERATION 0-30 MPH	.....3.7 sec
SEATING	.....2 (can be configured to 3, 4 or 5)
SUSPENSION	.....indep. front MacPherson strut
	.....bi-link rear suspension
BRAKES	.....front disc / rear drum
TURNING CIRCLE	.....34.8 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....5.1 in
TOW CAPACITY	.....2000 lb
CARGO CAPACITY (BEST IN CLASS)	.....131.7 cu.ft
WIDTH: WHEEL WELLS (standard pallet)	.....48.4 in
PAYLOAD (BEST IN CLASS)	.....1883 lb
WEIGHT	.....3512 lb
MPG	.....21/24/29 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$23,445
Backup camera group	.....565
Three bar utility roof rack by Mopar	.....595
Upgraded wheels	.....100
Rear hinged doors with glass	.....295
Sliding driver side door with glass	.....50
Sliding passenger side door with glass	.....50
Uconnect 5.0	.....495
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
TOTAL	\$26,590