

Mercedes-Benz is well known for heavy duty commercial and cargo vehicles worldwide, from urban utility to cross-country semi to military grade off-road. In the US, their work duty presence is represented by their Sprinter and smaller Metris van lineups, vehicles available globally for 30 years and introduced here just over 20 years ago.

Dig into our past issues, and you'll see we've been pretty intimate with the vans, from multiple tours of their assembly plants in South Carolina, to meeting with their recreational upfitters and more.

Mercedes is also currently red hot on the path toward a 100 percent battery electric product line.

Put it all together, and the new eSprinter van is

an inevitable result. The refinement for this evolution of an already versatile vehicle is quite straightforward—and very effective.

While the 4-cylinder diesel Sprinter has four body versions—140-inch wheelbase with either a standard or high roof; and 174-inch wheelbase with a high roof and either standard or extended rear body length—the eSprinter launches with just one, the longer wheelbase with its high roof, in its standard body length. The larger size is a win on many levels—accommodating a larger battery pack with considerable range; showing off its lower center of gravity; and its large cargo volume adding to a bragworthy overall formula. Other body

formats are sure to follow as assembly lines and customer response fall into place.

The eSprinter does offer two power outputs, our sample bearing the larger. While the internal combustion Sprinter starts at \$49,900, this body format at \$56,500, the eSprinter starts at \$71,886. From there, you can watch its energy-efficient powertrain earn back that \$15 grand, while also enjoying its power and silent operation benefits.

The eSprinter is a rear-driver with 488 cu.ft of cargo volume and a GVWR of 9,370 lb. Range is a bragging point, estimated at up to 273 miles standard (European) cycle or 329 miles city cycle. The feature list is a mile long—from engineering and

convenience details, to Mercedes me connect services with business task-oriented Efficient Fleet Management & Data Interfaces (trial).

A program of eXpertUpfitter solutions, such as shelving systems, workbenches and heavy-duty wood floors for heavy loads offers further customization options for outfitting as a mobile workshop or a more specialized delivery van.

We put our eSprinteer through a day of light but typical duty, loading it with heavy boxes of magazines and business records to take from the office to storage. The van generally handles much as you would expect on the freeway and is surprisingly manageable and maneuverable on local streets and for warehouse access and parking. With more load or less (our sample had a tied-down cube of sample cargo, even before our own load, and we

don't know its weight), it belies its size with the smooth acceleration and braking of the electric powertrain and with precise handling. For backing up, it is indeed long. (We have not had recent side-by-side comparison with other formats.)

Though long overall, the driver's seat was tight with limited range in ours, which had a dividing wall between seats and cargo. Ergonomics including the inside door handle and a very thin grab bar at the inside rear could be easily improved. A step completely inside the door is a bit awkward.

This is a great application of EV technology, as most will be used for local fleet or other daytime operations, basically unchanged except for quick, secure shut-offs and restarts. The van can be easily recharged at home base overnight, or even during lunch (42 minutes with DC fast charge). ■

Strictly business

EFFICIENCY, RANGE AND LOAD CAPACITY

BY JOE SAGE



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Charleston, SC
MOTOR	single motor (high output) 150kW (standard output 100kW)
BATTERY	lithium iron phosphate (LFP) 113 kWh
HP/TORQUE	(high output) 204 hp / 295 lb-ft (standard output 136 hp / 295 lb-ft)
TRANSMISSION	single-speed
DRIVETRAIN	RWD
TOP SPEED	75 mph
BRAKES	hydraulic
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	274 in / 170 in
WIDTH	(w/mirrors) 92.3 in; (w/o mirrors) 79.5 in
HEIGHT	107.1 in
CARGO CAPACITY	488 cu.ft
INTERIOR CARGO HEIGHT	79.1 in
PAYLOAD MAX	2624 lb
GVWR / GCWR	9370 / 11,023 lb
TOW CAPACITY	4100 lb
CHARGING TIME	wallbox 240V/32A 9.6 kW: ±12.5 hrs DC fast charge 50 kW: ±42 min
RANGE	(prelim) 273 miles
MPGe	na
BASE PRICE	Standard Output \$71,886 High Output \$75,316