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Spartan Motors Introduces Two New Motorhome Chassis Expands Leadership in Rear-Engine Diesel Niche

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LOUISVILLE, Ky., Nov. 30 /PRNewswire/ -- Custom chassis maker Spartan Motors, Inc. (NASDAQ:SPAR) is unveiling two new entry-level, rear-engine diesel chassis at the recreational vehicle industry's biggest trade show this week.

The Charlotte, Mich. manufacturer will broaden its presence in the entry-level Class A market segment through its introduction of the Rocket FTB and the Summit I chassis at the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) national show, which begins today in Louisville.

The Rocket FTB, or "for the Boomer," fills the industry's need for a smaller and more performance-oriented diesel-pusher motorhome platform. The Summit I, which stands for "independent front suspension," is the newest offering in Spartan's already successful Summit series, which was introduced at RVIA last year. Spartan said the original Summit series will be under at least six OEM brands in the coming year.

"These two new chassis demonstrate Spartan's commitment to offering RV customers viable entry-level diesel products at attractive prices," said John Szykiel, president and chief operating officer of Spartan Motors. "Diesel pushers remain the fastest growing segment of the Class A motorhome market, and we believe that the Rocket FTB and the Summit I will offer RV customers a high quality and cost-effective introduction to this niche."

Currently, most diesel-pusher chassis are available for 36-foot and longer RVs. The Summit series and the new Rocket FTB bring diesel pushers to the 28- to 36-foot motorhome segment of the market, which is now dominated by gas-powered motorhomes. Diesel-powered chassis offer up to 30 percent better fuel economy, increased torque and sustained horsepower at higher altitudes.

"These chassis are our response to increasing demand by RV consumers for the performance and ride of diesel pushers and confirm Spartan's presence on the leading edge of innovation in the RV market," said Szykiel.

Spartan's new Rocket FTB chassis is ideal for Class A motorhomes with gross vehicle weight (GVW) in the range of 22,000 pounds. It features a Cummins ISB electronic engine with 260 h.p., which gives it superior acceleration and passing abilities.

The Rocket FTB also offers:

- * Air suspension for superb ride and handling;
- * Antilock brakes for increased safety;
- * Fuel efficiencies at least 30 percent greater than comparable gas engines;
- * Electronic transmission for improved shifting performance and increased durability;
- * Turn angle of 51 degrees;
- * Low floor height for easy access; and
- * Tag axle option for improved weight distribution and superior ride handling.

"As the name suggests, the Rocket FTB is designed to appeal to a key target audience: The Baby Boomers who are entering their prime RV-buying years," said Roger Burrows, Spartan Motors vice president of sales and marketing. "This new chassis provides excellent handling, a superb ride and ease of entry -- a combination that makes it extremely

attractive to motorhome buyers who are stepping into their first Class A vehicle or looking to move up to the premium performance of a diesel RV."

Sztykiel added that that the Rocket FTB is ideal for today's increasingly mobile society, which wants to:

- * Work either at home or on the road, a trend made possible by wireless communication;
- * Have a vehicle that allows the family to enjoy a four-hour get-away in the country, a long football weekend or a three-week vacation with equal comfort; and
- * Combine the durability and performance of a sport utility vehicle (SUV) with the amenities -- and in many cases luxuries -- of home.

"The Rocket FTB will also serve the ever-growing market of RV rentals," Sztykiel explained. "These consumers have shown they want high quality and performance in a motorhome under 30 feet in length. Most vehicles in this category are currently Class C vehicles. Renters want something that's more upscale than the standard Class C motorhome, though, and the Rocket FTB provides a chassis for this important market niche."

The Summit I, Spartan's latest offering in the Summit chassis series, is the first chassis to bring independent front suspension to the entry-level niche. The Summit I series offers engine options ranging from 260 h.p. to 315 h.p. in motorhomes with GVW of 22,000 lbs. to 27,500 lbs.

The Summit I combines a Cummins ISB engine with Reyco/Granning IFS and an Allison 1000 series fully electronic, five-speed transmission with overdrive. This combination allows the Summit I to offer acceleration comparable to higher-end motorhomes with 300 horsepower and above engines.

The Summit I also offers:

- * A lightweight, modular design which is 275 pounds lighter than comparable first generation IFS systems;
- * Full air brake system with ABS;
- * Full air suspension for superior ride and comfort; and
- * Turn angle of 51 degrees with outboard mounted airbags for improved handling.

"The new Summit I offers outstanding performance and tremendous maneuverability at an affordable price," Burrows said. "Spartan can now offer its entry-level customers the premium handling advantages of higher-priced motorhomes, which we believe will draw more consumers to the diesel-pusher market."

Spartan Motors will begin shipping limited prototypes of the Rocket FTB and Spartan I chassis in early spring, with full production scheduled to begin by mid-year 2000.

Spartan Motors, Inc. (<https://theshyftgroup.com/>) is a leading developer and manufacturer of custom chassis for the RV market as well as for fire trucks, transit buses, school buses and other specialty vehicles. The Company also owns three fire and rescue companies and a school bus manufacturer.

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