

# Apple pushes into the automobile technology

by Harald Weiss, Geneva, 7 March 2014



**Apple's idea:** The iPhone will become the center point of the vehicle as shown here in a Mercedes C class. The system CarPlay brings all of the functions of a smart phone into the car—most important, the speech-driven advisor Siri.

**GENEVA AUTOMOBILE SALON:** *After Google has promoted its "Open Automotive Alliance" (OAA), a combination of smart phone and automotive systems, Apple is presenting its competing system CarPlay.*

With this move the iPhone 5 and higher will become a central control and communication system for vehicles. As current partners, Apple names Ferrari, Volvo, and Mercedes, all of whom will bring cars to the market by year's end with CarPlay. Mercedes will present the Apple solution in a car of the C class, but this car will not be just limited to CarPlay.

The central element is a touch screen display in the central console like Apple's speech-recognition advisor Siri. From here diverse iPhone features like maps, music, Internet radio, or SMS can be used. Very important is the two-way speech function. Thus SMSs will only be read aloud, and they can be answered only by speaking. The connection between iPhone and vehicle will be made not via Bluetooth but rather through a USB connection. This is better because the Bluetooth connection has not proven itself to be particularly stable. Besides this, the iPhone will be charged while connected.

Volvo will bring CarPlay to the market in its new XC90 SUV. Development director Peter Mertens advised in his press conference that the cooperation with Apple is a significant further step in Volvo's design principle. Through the use of an intelligent touch screen, the number of buttons used to operate devices in the vehicle can be reduced. "We want to come out of this with 10 buttons maximum," he explained as his development goal.

There are still many other open questions concerning the combination of smart phone and vehicle. For example, the compatibility of with other smart phones. So far only Mercedes has said that it will support both iPhone and Android-based cell phones.

With what Mercedes and Volvo showed in Geneva, Apple is ahead with this integration. With OAA Google can only point to its statement of intentions with its founding members Audi, Honda, and Hyundai. It cannot yet present a working solution.

But the concept of both U.S. giants is completely different. Apple puts CarPlay in the center of its solution. The vehicle itself is only a complex, connected peripheral. Google, on the other hand, plans to have the vehicle itself equipped with an Android system, and any smart phone can be then connected with the vehicle phone and used to operate it.