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Finally, the plane (or car?) for the trader who has long viewed the highway as wasted runway space.  
by Nick Kolakowski

Tucked amid the gleaming SUVs and supercars at this year's New York Auto Show, Milner Motors' AirCar was hard to miss, especially once you glimpsed the large, foldable wings bolted to its bullet-shaped body. The flying car, the fantasy of every red-blooded driver since George Jetson first took off from his driveway, had finally arrived on the floor of the Jacob K. Javits Center. Clearly, it would not be long before you were swooping into Chicago, landing on Lake Shore Drive and motoring to the Merc -- all from the comfort of one little seat!

Right?  
Maybe?  
Perhaps.

Indeed, if you believe the marketing prospectus, Milner's \$450,000, lightweight four-seater will hit the market, as a kit plane, in 2011. Two years before that, another company -- Woburn, Massachusetts-based Terrafugia -- plans to release its own flying car, the even sportier two-seat Transition, with a projected base sticker of just \$148,000. (The waiting list, according to the company, is roughly 50 names deep.) That should give you enough time to earn your pilot's license, for starters -- or widen your driveway to accommodate your new plane. Can't wait even that long? Well, you can always fly the Transition this very afternoon via a free downloadable mod (at [terrafugia.com](http://terrafugia.com)) for the X-Plane flight simulator. That's what we did. And that due diligence, if not conclusive, was sure a lot of fun.

Powered by a four-stroke Rotax 912 S engine, the Transition is designed to fly like a sport plane -- capable of a peppy enough 115 mph and some catlike maneuverability, especially when taken for a circuit at 3,600 feet over a digital desert on a clear day. The finely rendered cockpit features top-of-the-line avionics and conveniently placed controls, including a square red button above the radar that proves useful to the stall-happy rookie -- click on it, and a chipper red-and-white parachute snaps open from the top of the plane, ostensibly ensuring a gentle descent.

If there's one drawback to the Transition, it's what happens when you're back on the ground. Come in for your first planned landing, quickly pull to a stop (only 1,700 feet of blacktop required), push the button to retract your wings and...nada. For reasons we'll never fathom, the rocket scientists at Terrafugia designed a flight simulator for the world's first flying car that doesn't drive. Apparently, you'll just have to wait for the real thing to pilot this car into the parking lot.

### **Due Diligence**

Milner Motors' Aircar  
Debuting: 2011  
Cost: \$450,000  
Engine: Dual 160-hp ducted fans  
Cabin Seating: 4  
Maximum Air Speed: 200 mph  
Maximum Altitude: 25,000 feet  
Minimum Runway Length: 3,000 feet

Terrafugia Transition  
Debuting: 2009  
Cost: \$148,000  
Engine: Four-stroke Rotax 912 S engine  
Cabin Seating: 2  
Maximum Air Speed: 115 mph  
Maximum Altitude: 10,000 feet  
Minimum Runway Length: 1,700 feet