

# Putin Tests Oligarch's Hybrid Car

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Mikhail Prokhorov, left, with Vladimir Putin at the Gorki presidential residence Friday. **Alexei Nikolsky**

NOVO-OGARYOVO — Prime Minister Vladimir Putin took a ride Friday in a prototype of Russia's first hybrid car, the Yo-Mobile, which billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov plans to start mass-producing next year.

With Putin in the driver's seat and Yo-Avto chief executive Andrei Biryukov riding shotgun, the pair drove 10 kilometers on Rublyovo-Uspenskoye Shosse from Putin's out-of-town residence to President Dmitry Medvedev's official home at Gorki for a Security Council meeting. Prokhorov followed in another Yo-Mobile.

Putin's impressions from the trip haven't been reported.

Shortly before the ride, Putin discussed with officials, businessmen and scientists measures to produce more high-tech products, saying Prokhorov's project was one of the attempts in this field.

Putin, however, expressed some doubts about the durability of the car during the meeting.

"I'd like to drive this Yo-Mobile of yours to Dmitry Anatolyevich's and show it to him," Putin said, referring to Medvedev's residence. "Will it be able to go that long? It's not far. It won't fall apart?"

Prokhorov assured the prime minister that it wouldn't.

Biryukov said later that the plant being built in St. Petersburg is scheduled to start producing the cars toward the end of the next year. Andrei Ginzburg, chief engineer of the car, said separately that they intend to buy some parts from Canadian maker Magna's production facilities in Russia. He spoke at a meeting at the Association of European Businesses in Moscow.

The car will not cost more than 450,000 rubles (\$15,900), Biryukov said. In addition to the St. Petersburg plant, which will have the capacity to make 10,000 cars per year, Prokhorov's company is considering building more manufacturing capacity elsewhere in the country.

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