Good morning. I’m Ron Cogan, editor and publisher of Green Car Journal and CarsOfChange.com. I’m pleased to be here at the Washington Auto Show to present our 2016 Green Car Awards program.

I’m always pleased to be here in Washington because this show is unique. No other auto show in the country can lay claim to being the “policy show,” with unprecedented proximity to the legislators and policymakers who have a direct influence on the cars we drive.

After all, this is where you may see Members of Congress strolling the aisles to see what’s new in the auto industry, hear an announcement by the Department of Energy, or witness a visit by the President.

It may be that other areas of the country are the nation’s heart and soul of auto design and manufacturing. But it’s here, in Washington DC, where so much of the auto industry’s direction, and ultimately its products, are influenced through guidelines, regulations, or incentives to be better, cleaner, and safer for the sake of all.

We’ve witnessed this over decades as the environmental performance of automobiles has continually improved, with vehicles producing far fewer tailpipe emissions and emitting decreased CO2 greenhouse gasses. For many years, Corporate Average Fuel Economy regulations have driven increased fuel efficiency, with this trend accelerating as automakers gather the momentum to achieve a mandated 54.5 mpg fleet-wide fuel economy average by 2025. And cars today are safer because crashworthiness is held to high standards and crash performance is thoroughly quantified.

The cumulative effect of these regulations and incentives has been to bring safer, greener, and better automobiles to the nation’s highways. The ‘green’ cars on display here in our awards finalists exhibit – and many more on the show floor – illustrate how automakers have risen to the challenge of offering new models with exemplary environmental performance, decreased greenhouse gas emissions, and higher efficiency.

Now we’re seeing a new focus building in Washington to provide guidance as cars become smarter and more autonomous, with automated driving, lane-keeping, and other driver assist systems coming to the fore. Clearly, the age of the connected car has arrived.

2016 CONNECTED GREEN CAR OF THE YEAR

It’s no longer enough to have the usual array of advanced electronics delivering the latest in infotainment, convenience, and safety. Now we want lane assist, adaptive cruise control, assisted parking, advanced information systems, and autonomous driving features that make the daily drive more convenient, safer, and frankly, more enjoyable and less stressful.

Integrate this with the greater levels of environmental performance being built into a growing number of today’s new models and you’re witnessing the cars of the future, in the here-and-now.

Enter Green Car Journal’s Connected Green Car of the Year™, an award that seeks to recognize vehicles that intelligently blend sophisticated connected technologies with advanced powertrains,
materials, and design – all coming together to deliver driving enjoyment, efficiency, and enhanced safety with lower environmental impact.

Honoring the vehicles that best exemplify the integration of environmental performance and connected technology is timely, and important. We begin with this year’s nominees, which include the Audi A3 e-tron, BMW 330e, Chevrolet Malibu Hybrid, Toyota Prius, and Volvo XC90 T8.

Our 2016 Connected Green car of the Year™ delivers unexpected levels of connectivity for its price point, which is accessible to a great many buyers today. This sedan features standard and available features that include Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning, lane keep assist, forward collision alert, and a safety-focused Teen Driver feature. Plus, this all-new hybrid delivers appealing style and performance along with a combined 47 mpg.

I’m proud to announce that our 2016 Connected Green Car of the Year™ is Chevrolet’s all-new Malibu Hybrid.

2016 LUXURY GREEN CAR OF THE YEAR
Another one of our favorite categories is aspirational vehicles. In the beginning, if you wanted a high efficiency or environmentally positive vehicle it meant some sacrifices were in order. These early vehicles were typically small, lightweight, and not very well isolated from the road. Performance was an afterthought, if it was thought of at all. Efficiency was their hallmark and not surprisingly, there was no luxury to be found here.

This has changed in a big way. Now automakers offer aspirational vehicles that feature the aesthetics of a sleek sedan, the excitement of a sports car, or the functionality of an SUV, combined with high efficiency or even plug-in hybrid power.

Finalists for 2016 Luxury Green Car of the Year™ title are the BMW X5 xDrive40e, Lexus RX 450h, Mercedes-Benz C350e, Porsche Cayenne S E-Hybrid, and Volvo XC90 T8. Each brings its own brand of luxury to the market and all make use of efficient hybrid or plug-in hybrid power.

Each of these sends a clear message: If you want higher efficiency, lower environmental impact, and the signature features that aspirational vehicles bring to drivers, then there is no sacrifice to be made here. You can have it all, while driving with a clear conscience.

Green Car Journal’s 2016 Luxury Green Car of the Year™ is a standout. It uses a two-liter supercharged and turbocharged engine with a rear axle electric motor, driving about 17 electric miles on its lithium-ion batteries and significantly farther in hybrid mode. It’s packed with advanced electronics and driver assist systems. Built on a Scalable Product Architecture modular chassis, this luxury SUV brings a high degree of functionality to the highway as the first seven-passenger vehicle to offer plug-in hybrid power.

I’m pleased to announce that Green Car Journal’s 2016 Luxury Green Car of the Year™ is the Volvo XC90 T8.

2016 GREEN SUV OF THE YEAR
SUVs continue to be the favored vehicle for families and those with active lifestyles. The reasons are not surprising – they offer versatile seating and cargo carrying capability, plus these days all the connectivity and functionality you could want. Their popularity is surging.

That’s why it’s important that SUVs continue to evolve with improved environmental performance in mind – whether offering a smaller footprint for easier maneuverability and built-in efficiency, or using advanced powertrains that eke the most from a gallon of fuel or incorporate hybrid power. This is happening in a big way with expanding choices of compact crossover SUVs and larger competitors that simply keep getting better, and more efficient.

Our finalists for 2016 Green SUV of the Year™ – bright stars amid a growing field of green competitors – are the BMW X1 xDrive 28i, Honda HR-V, Hyundai Tucson, Mazda CX-3, and Toyota RAV4 Hybrid.

The 2016 Green SUV of the Year™ had tough competition, but rose to the top by virtue of its remarkable versatility and efficiency. This new crossover blends the sporty styling of a coupe with the functionality of an SUV. It’s powered by a 1.8-liter i-VTEC 4-cylinder delivering up to 35 highway mpg, with an Eco Assist system that helps drivers achieve maximum mpg. Inside, this subcompact crossover’s fold-flat, second row ‘Magic Seat’ offers a welcome level of versatility with passenger and cargo volume rivaling that of some midsize SUVs.

I’m proud to announce that Green Car Journal’s 2016 Green SUV of the Year™ is the Honda HR-V.

Thanks to all of you for joining us here today at the Washington Auto Show’s Green Car Awards presentation. Now we’ll move to the winning vehicles for photo opportunities.