C
hevrolet will focus on cars — at least for the next 18 months — as GM’s biggest brand seeks to build a reputation for fuel economy.

The next-generation Chevrolet Malibu mid-sized sedan will launch in early 2012. The Spark minicar will hit the United States later next year from South Korea. The redesigned Impala large sedan is slated for the first quarter of 2013.

GM’s coming cars, trucks to target fuel efficiency

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Chevrolet Spark

FUTURE PRODUCTS
GENERAL MOTORS

WHAT DO THE TERMS MEAN?

■ Freshen: Sheet metal untouched; changes may include new grille, front and/or rear fascia, headlight and taillight modules

■ Reskin: Minor changes to the vehicle’s overall sheet metal; may include new hood, front and/or rear fenders

■ Restyle: Extensive changes to the exterior and interior

■ Re-engineer: Vehicle’s platform and components receive an extensive makeover to reduce noise, vibration and harshness; upgrades made to improve such qualities as ride, handling, braking and steering, and in some cases safety

■ Redesign: New platform; new interior and exterior; engine and transmission could be carried over

2012 model year:

Chevrolet Sonic: In August, production begins on Spark’s sister car, the five-door Daewoo Matiz hatchback. The minicar’s U.S. launch is set for early 2012. The four-door compact is the Aveo. The Sonic, built at GM’s Lordstown, Ohio, plant, will be switched to the second half of 2012.

Chevrolet: The plug-in hybrid is planned for the crossover in the 2013 or 2014 model year, which would include extensive interior improvements. It also will get GM’s new 3.6-liter V-6 engine, replacing the current 3.6-liter version. The nine-speed transmission will be shared with the LaCrosse, the Camaro and the Buick Verano.

Tahoe, Suburban: The redesigned SUVs are due in the first half of 2013 as 2014 models. They will be offered as standard or as a hybrid. The hybrid system will include an eight-speed transmission and could include the addition of GM’s four-mode hybrid system. That is an upgrade of its current two-mode system, which uses planetary gears and electric motors to conserve fuel.

Chevrolet: The compact pickup will be discontinued when the Shrevport, La., plant that makes it is shuttered by mid-2012. In March, though, as an auto show in Thailand, GM unveiled a next-generation of the Colorado to be sold in Asian markets. Sources say that front-drive pickup will be sold here, but GM hasn’t announced plans to do so. The timing is uncertain, as is whether the U.S. market would get an all-wheel-drive version.

Silverado: A re-engineered, restyled pickup is expected in the second half of 2013 as a 2014 model. GM is expected to use a number of powertrain features to boost fuel efficiency, including a likely six-cylinder turbocharged version and eight-speed transmission. GM also will use lightweight materials in an effort to gain a fuel-economy edge over rival Ford Motor Co.’s F-150, which was redesigned for the 2009 model year.

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Chevrolet is the opening move in GM’s plans for the 2012-14 model years, according to sources inside GM and in the industry.

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Buick adds style, fuel economy to attract younger buyers

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Buick is adding sportiness and better fuel economy to expand its lineup and attract younger buyers.

On tap: a late-2011 launch of the Verano, Buick’s first compact car in about 20 years. This fall Buick also will introduce the Regal GS, a sporty turbocharged model.

Another highlight is the 2012 LaCrosse, which builds on the 2010 version and gains a new system to help drivers avoid collisions.

Also this year, Buick will introduce a redesign on the 2012 Buick LaCrosse and Regal. General Motors picked Buick for the debut of the light-hybrid system, which is likely to work its way across GM’s brands in coming years.

For the 2013 model year, Buick likely will roll out a small crossover. It’s also