

Styling Design of New N-ONE

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ABSTRACT

Following the grand concept of “One’s MINI TOURER,” the N-ONE was developed as a new basic Japanese car with cruising performance and a package in which four adults could take a long drive in comfort, and that pursued high quality and friendly design to surpass small cars while staying within the kei car specification.

The design concept was expressed as “timeless N design,” and the N-ONE is intended to be used affectionately for many years as a new basic car. To that end, the design effort achieved “simplicity” along with a “high-quality sense” that does not feel like the kei car class.

The styling themes of the exterior are “friendly,” “comfortable,” and “usable,” while those of the interior are “exhilarating,” “enriching,” and “usable.” The colors and fabric were also developed to bring out these characteristics.

1. Introduction

Since entering the automobile market in 1963 with a kei car, Honda has offered unique products unlike those of any other manufacturer. Among them, the N360 was born as Honda’s first kei car bringing together modern design, far better cruising than other cars, a comfortable interior space even when driving long distances, and a high level of safety. The N360 encouraged Japanese society to become more motorized and spurred a boom in private car ownership so that many users experienced the car-owning life for the first time. The N-ONE was developed to carry on this intention of the N360.

As Honda set about to develop its third model in the N Series, it decided to target young people and empty nesters (those whose children are now grown). This is in distinction to the N BOX which was geared toward families with young children. When Honda researched its target users, it found that these users’ high level of environmental awareness led them to want high quality they could use for many years. Among the empty nesters in particular, Honda found that more and more were downsizing from sedans and small cars to kei cars. It also found that the area over which people drive their kei cars, which previously consisted of shopping, commuting, and other short trips, is expanding as

user activities grow more diverse.

Thus Honda selected three keywords for the N-ONE: “timeless N design” for the high-quality sense to win over downsizers, “comfortable tourer performance” for the excellent cruising and comfortable interior space that make long trips possible, and “safe driving performance” for a high level of safety achieved. It then developed “One’s MINI TOURER” to be the best personal car for each customer (Fig. 1).

Honda also set premium specifications to provide even higher quality design and cruising to satisfy customers looking for the value of a high-end car.



Fig. 1 Grand concept

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2. Design Concept

To realize a new basic car as a kei car surpassing a small car, Honda chose “timeless N design” as the N-ONE’s design concept.

To achieve a car that owners could drive with affection and pride throughout the years, Honda aimed for friendliness, intuitiveness, and simplicity that is never dull, along with a high-quality design that does not feel like the kei car class, so that drivers would accept it as their first car (Fig. 2).

From the start of development, it also aimed to achieve a design built for customization, so that owners could easily change the impression the car makes to suit their tastes.

Honda defined its premium specification concept as “modern premium,” aiming for a design that is of higher quality and euphoria than a normal car.



Fig. 2 Overview of N-ONE

3. Package Layout

To achieve “One’s MINI TOURER,” Honda aimed to create a “mini tourer package” that offers a form designed for high-speed, long-distance cruising, more spaciousness than a small car despite fitting within the kei car size specification, and everyday utility.

3.1. Both Trapezoid Form and Comfortable Space

To achieve a form that embodies excellent cruising with a low center of gravity, the designers selected a vibrant trapezoid form that emphasizes the slope of the

tailgate in side view and gives a look of stability even when traveling at high speed. They moreover achieved a top-of-class effective interior length by taking advantage of the superiority of the N series’ innovative platform. Thus they realized a space in which four adults could pass time comfortably, balanced with a sufficient luggage compartment. As a result, there is more space from front to back than in a small car, enough so that passengers in the rear seat can cross their legs, and at the same time, a luggage compartment large enough to hold four adults’ luggage for an overnight trip (Fig. 3).

3.2. Everyday Utility

To enhance everyday utility, the designers adopted the N Series’ innovative platform for the luggage compartment area, and used a rear seat that can be arranged a variety of ways (a 5:5 split) with the same one-motion dive-down and tip-up mechanism as the N BOX.

When in dive-down mode, the luggage compartment length is a top-of-class 1560 mm, making the luggage compartment large enough to hold two mountain bikes with their front tires removed (Fig. 4). There is 39 L of underfloor storage space beneath the trunk, where car maintenance supplies, soiled items, and anything else the user does not want to be seen can be kept out of sight. The ground height of the tailgate opening is a class-lowest 575

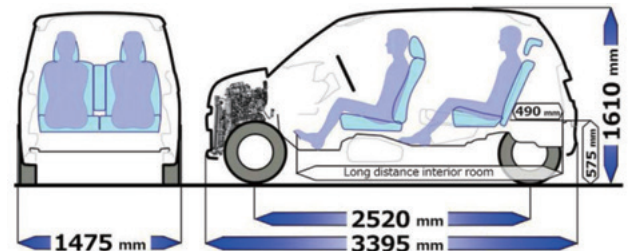


Fig. 3 Package layout

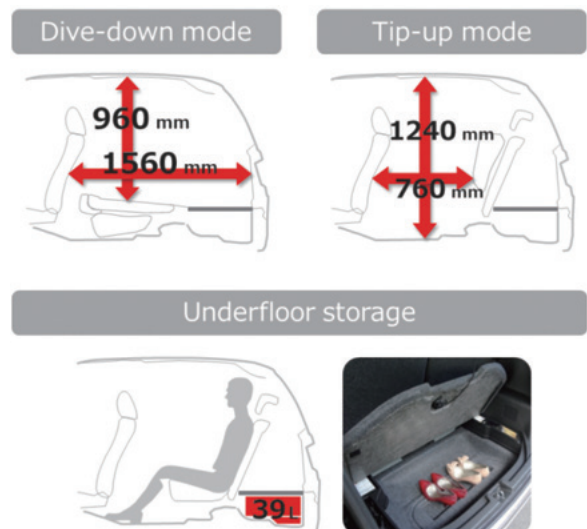


Fig. 4 Utility of rear seat and trunk

mm, which is level with the luggage compartment floor and makes it easy to load and unload heavy luggage.

In terms of handling, the designers moved the A pillar toward the back, giving a wide field of vision in front. The result is a commanding view and good visibility of traffic in the oncoming lane in the corner. Moreover, the horizontal beltline from the front window to side window creates a good field of vision for handling even when moving in reverse (Fig. 5).

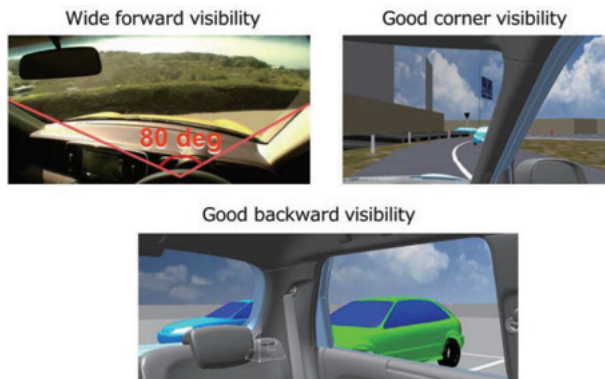


Fig. 5 Good visibility

4. Exterior Design

4.1. Exterior Design Concept

The exterior design pursues simplicity and high quality as a new vehicle directly descended from the N360, so that the car feels familiar to drivers who will use it with affection over many years. Three keywords guided the design process: friendly, comfortable, and usable (Fig. 6).

Aspects that express “friendly” include a simple silhouette with few elements, such as a child’s drawing of a car, and charming round headlights.

“Comfortable” is expressed by the thick, strong front mask and side body and by the stable-looking trapezoid form.

The design becomes more “usable” by using a panoramic cantilever window graphic to ensure an excellent field of vision and by heaping up the profile above the headlights, making the front edge of the engine hood easy to see and helping to ensure excellent handling.

In front view, the fender projects outward from the short but thick and sturdy front mask to express dynamism and comfort. Moreover, the headlights are contained within the grille, emphasizing the wide look and expressing strength and dynamism. The license plate is located in the center, giving the car a symmetrical face.

The side view is characterized by simplicity with few elements, a moderately sloped tailgate, and a roof that slopes forward to give a vibrant feel. Fenders project out from the four corners of the thick body creating a stable-looking trapezoid form. Additionally, the sharp character lines and the modulating surfaces that fill in the space

between them express a three-dimensional look, and sense of quality within the width allowed by kei car specifications.

The rear view emphasizes a look of stability with a trapezoid form from which the rear fenders project. The rear combination lamp has a rectangular motif with a simple, friendly-looking form (Fig. 7).

4.2. Lighting Design Concept

The headlights consist of tubular projector units in circular outer forms. This represents the eyes of a human face, and presents an energetic, youthful expression. The position lamps use light guiding bodies that emit rings of light creating an iconic show of lighting that makes the car recognizable as an N-ONE even at night. The HID specifications use escaped light from the projector to illuminate the circumference of the projector creating a higher sense of value without greatly adding to cost.

The rear combination lamps have a friendly-looking rectangular outer form. This is emphasized by the tail lamps and stop lamps, which use light guiding bodies to illuminate the rectangular perimeter, for lighting that is as iconic as in the front (Fig. 8).



Fig. 6 Exterior design concept



Fig. 7 Exterior rendering

4.3. Grille Design Concept

The grille design projects a high-quality, wide look by containing the headlights within the glossy black outer form with a large surface area reminiscent of the N360. Moreover, with the grille's wide, relatively flat surface, it is possible to easily and effectively decorate it with decals and customize it to meet customers' different needs (Fig. 9).

4.4. Exterior Design of Premium Grade

The exterior design of the premium grade of the N-ONE is based on a theme of higher quality and euphoria than anything else in the kei car class. The front achieves both cruising enjoyment and quality with sharp and wide-looking bumpers and a plated, wide-open grille. From the side to the rear, there is plated molding running from the lower part of the doors to the rear bumper enhancing the look of quality. At the same time, the tailgate spoiler, providing both stylish design and aerodynamic performance ensures cruising euphoria. Finally, the large-diameter 15-inch aluminum wheels create a sporty design that accentuates the joy of cruising (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 Exterior design of premium grade

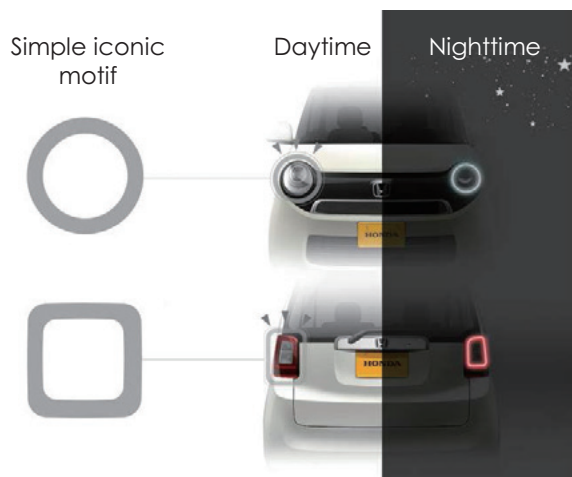


Fig. 8 Lighting image



Fig. 9 Grille design

5. Interior Design

5.1. Interior Design Concept

The interior design features a simple, intuitive motif that drivers can use with affection over many years. Details are very carefully crafted so that the interior has a look of exhilaration and high quality. Three keywords guided the design process: exhilarating, enriching, and usable (Fig. 11).

“Exhilarating” is expressed by shaping the overall interior with a simple structure and intuitive motif, creating a neat and comfortable space.

“Enriching” is achieved by expressing a sense of deliberateness, with a form that has a three-dimensional look with modulations. The aim was to create a high texture that does not feel like the kei car class.

“Usable” is achieved by plentiful utilities, and a



Fig. 11 Interior design concept

comfortable audio system built around the front seat.

The instrument panel has a horizontally aligned motif that keeps the center from sticking out too far so that occupants do not sense a boundary between the driver's seat and front passenger's seat. And the greater depth of the panel helps to create a form that gives a spacious feel and adds to the sense of exhilaration (Fig. 12).

The instrument panel upper section, which tends to draw the occupants' line of vision, has a wide decoration running from left to right enhancing the sense of texture. This decoration slopes toward the occupants giving them a sense of being enveloped and enhancing comfort during high-speed cruising.

The instrument panel and doors have a two-tone color scheme creating a visually refined look.

Using the instrument panel upper section, with its extra depth that expresses spaciousness, the designers added wide, highly usable trays that are accessible to both driver and passenger. Below the instrument panel are convenient open trays in three places: driver's side, passenger's side, and center. These emphasize the horizontal layout and a sense of lightness.

The seats have a placid and clean motif and express quality with their three-dimensional form. They are also designed with hold to envelop the occupant, which creates a form that is comfortable and not tiring even on long drives (Fig. 13).



Fig. 12 Interior rendering



Fig. 13 Seat design

The audio system is divided into the monitor and controls. The monitor is made easier to see by placing it on the upper far side of the instrument panel where there is minimum eye movement. Placing the controls closer to the passenger makes them easier to use (Fig. 14).

5.2. Interior Design of Premium Grade

The interior design of the premium grade is based on a theme of higher quality, poise, and elation than anything else in the kei car class. The premium grade has exclusive interior coloring, decorative patterns, and fabric. The interior as a whole is coordinated using the elaborate graphics of the meters and the violet-colored lighting that is combined with the center lower tray (Fig. 15).



Fig. 14 Audio design



Fig. 15 Interior design of premium grade

6. Color and Fabric Design

6.1. Exterior Color

The lineup consists of a rich selection of vibrant exterior colors so that customers can choose their favorites and use their cars with affection over many years. Between the normal and premium grades, 11 colors are available, ranging from the standard basic colors to casual and bright fun colors and premium colors for a high-quality, mature

feel. Therefore customers are able to choose colors to suit their own tastes (Fig. 16).

There are also five two-tone color patterns borrowed from the N BOX+, which draw out the individuality of the N-ONE even more attractively (Fig. 17).

Innocent Blue Metallic, a new color in the normal grade, presents an image of pure blue composed of layers of air and water. It is meant to appeal universally across the generations and eras. The color appears to be a solid one at first glance, but has a somewhat yellowish hue. The overall impression aims to feel nostalgic to older drivers and impressive and fresh to younger ones.

Premium Blue Moon Pearl, a new color in the premium grade, presents an image of the calm twilight sky. It is intended as a high-quality and urban color (Fig. 18).



Fig. 16 Exterior color line-up



Fig. 17 Two-tone roof line-up

6.2. Interior Color

The intent of the normal grade's interior color is to provide an atmosphere a person could stay with for a long period of time, one which would give feelings of relief and calm as soon as the door was opened to go inside. Thus a bright beige with restrained chroma was chosen as the base tone creating an impression of neatness and friendliness overall. Dark brown is used for the instrument panel and door lining. The contrast gives this two-tone scheme an enriching, high-quality feel. There is also a color variation with a unified black interior that creates a feel of tight fearlessness and providing for the needs of a wider range of customers.

The seat fabric has a detailed houndstooth check pattern in a design to be appreciated with affection by both sexes, no matter the generation or age (Fig. 19).



Fig. 18 New colors



Fig. 19 Interior color variations

The instrument panel upper section is decorated with a glossy finish that seeks to enhance the texture. This decorative element provides accent for the interior as a whole and achieves a high-texture interior that does not feel like the kei car class (Fig. 20).

The premium grade's interior has a two-tone color scheme combining burgundy (a deep red) with a black base tone, creating a poised, modern look.

The instrument panel upper section and door lining are decorated with a black wood grain pattern for a look of high quality.

The seat fabric is embossed with a quilted look which brings out a three-dimensional, high-quality feel. The same type of fabric is used for the door lining to enhance the enriching feel (Fig. 21).



Fig. 20 Instrument panel plating



Fig. 21 Premium interior color

7. New Appeal Initiative

As a first-time experiment, Honda wrote a Design Point Book; a kind of guide to the N-ONE's design to explain to more customers the car's attractiveness in an intuitive way (Fig. 22).

This is not to give a difficult technical explanation of the design. Rather, it is like a storybook, primarily visual and with as little text as possible, so that even a child or a person not particularly interested in cars can understand it. The Design Point Book was written to convey those things that a catalog cannot: the thinking of the people who made it, and Honda's attitude toward craftsmanship. The purpose

of this is to encourage even more affection for the car among customers.

The content begins with the background story of the N-ONE, and is divided into five topics: form, good feeling, sense of confidence, goodness, and fun. It gives a very understandable explanation of the car's modeling and safety; topics that otherwise tend to seem difficult.

To begin with, the book gives background to the birth of the N360, its impact on society, and so on. The "form" section explains how the interior and exterior were designed to leave an indelible impression with just one look. The "feel good" section covers packaging (e.g., the spaciousness and excellent visibility) and cruising performance. "Sense of confidence" covers safety performance, such as the good



Fig. 22 N-ONE design point book

handling and passive safety functions. “Goodness” takes a different tone from the other pages to describe the exacting modeling and highly textured surface finishing. “Fun,” the final section, talks about the exterior colors and the fun of choosing from the wide selection of colors, as well as the fun of using the N-ONE’s customizable features and its various utilities.

The book uses a variety of photos, illustrations, and a humorous tone to keep the reader interested, while maintaining a unified feel to all the above content.

8. Conclusion

The N BOX, the first vehicle in the N Series, went beyond the ordinary kei car to feature minivan-like spaciousness. The N BOX+, the second vehicle in the series, offered utility unprecedented in kei cars. As a “new basic Japanese car” to surpass small cars and as the third vehicle in the series, the N-ONE is a perfect fit in the N Series of vehicles that exceed customer expectations.

Developed with the design concept of “timeless N design,” the N-ONE has achieved a design that can be used with affection over many years, regardless of changes in the times and in spite of the conventional hierarchy.

It is Honda’s sincere hope that the N-ONE, developed as above, will be more than just a “thing” people own. Rather, it is hoped the car will be a “just-for-you” vehicle, one that becomes a beloved part of the family, stays part of the family a long time, and carries with it many memories.

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