In the Future, We'll All Be Working on the Road

The Bentley Mulsanne Executive Interior Concept is brimming with digital hyperbole.

Lets get down to brass tacks. Built into this car (which, despite its concept label, will be a made-to-order version of the ultra-upscale Mulsanne [1]) you've got:

- Built-in mobile Wi-Fi.
- Two iPads [2] and keyboards that fold up from a tray table. It should be noted that, in this context, they feel and work more like super-slim laptops that are built into the car. The tray tables electronically fold out for maximum futuristic-ness.
- A 15.6-inch high-def TV screen that is, as the company's marketing material puts it, "backed by the processing power of both an onboard hard drive and an Apple Mac computer housed in a bespoke boot drawer."
- A pair of smaller TVs, built into the front seat headrests.

Sure, if you've even casually followed the evolution of the auto interior over the past decade, you've noticed that our cars are now increasingly home to more and bigger screens. Touchscreen infotainment systems are now the standard, and countless cars pair headrest monitors with a *Spongebob Squarepants* DVD to serve as a sort of digital babysitter. But this car takes it all a few steps further.

The basic idea: Create a fully connected mobile office. If you're one of the masters of the universe that this vehicle is aimed at, traffic can no longer come between you and productivity. The Mulsanne concept is your own personal Air Force One. It's also the absolutely logical conclusion of the convergence of our mobile devices and mobile transportation units. (Check out the pic below for the full experience.)

On a recent test drive of the Mulsanne concept, I parked myself in the backseat to see if it actually was possible to get real work done in this thing while riding around town. In fact, the onboard Internet proved reliable (and, dare I say: the ride proved smooth) — enough that I was able to punch out a skeleton for this very story on one of the onboard iPads.

But while this vehicle may be almost hilarious to look at (So! Many! Screens!), it's no joke. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average American spends more than 50 minutes per day commuting to work — a figure that glosses over the millions of long-distance commuters whose treks to work are basically "epic poems," as *Mad Men*'s Pete Campbell called it.

Those hours of lost productivity can prove soul-sucking, eat into time that could be spent working, and generally make life less joyful. And unless we change how we build our cities and suburbs, those hours on the road will likely go up, and not down. It will likely become a fact of life that many, many folks will need use the time they take to get to and from work to actually… you know… work. My friends who ride the train into Manhattan from Connecticut and New Jersey do this already.

The key will be to build this functionality into cars in a way that's both safe, and accessible to folks who can't afford Bentleys — or chauffeurs.

Images courtesy of Bentley

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