A $25,000 electric Jeep? Challenging but possible, CEO says

Earlier this week, Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares took the stage at the Bernstein investor conference and threw down the gauntlet.

Tavares, who oversees companies like Fiat, Chrysler, Dodge, Ram, and, most importantly, Jeep, said the launch of the new all-electric Jeep Wagoneer S would signal the start of an EV "offensive" that would take the US by storm, according to multiple reports. And part of that offensive would include a more affordable electric Jeep, priced somewhere in the range of $25,000.

For Jeep CEO Antonio Filosa, the announcement from his boss came as a bit of a shock.

"It's a big challenge," Filosa said Thursday, hours after unveiling the Wagoneer S in New York City. "And unexpected."

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Unexpected — and perhaps also a little awkward. After all, the Wagoneer S, with its premium materials, high-tech components, and impressive performance capabilities, is very much not an affordable EV. The fully loaded First Launch edition will start at $71,995 — not exactly a price meant to spur mass adoption.

Still, Filosa says Jeep will rise to the challenge. But how long will it take? Timing is of the essence. EV sales are still growing but at a slower pace than previous years. Buyers are more discerning. They're looking for vehicles that are fast charging with plenty of range but also priced in a way that's affordable. Most experts have said a $25,000 EV could help that line graph turn from a gentle slope into a hockey stick. But when it comes to exact timetables, only Tavares seems to know for now.

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"My boss says soon," Filosa said with a smile. "Obviously, its an engineering [challenge], so we need to put people [in charge of] developing the car. We have good ideas, we already had our calculation, and we strongly believe that we can get there. Strongly believe."

Obviously, the project is still in its very early stages. While announcing the Wagoneer S, Filosa said the Wrangler-esque Jeep Recon would be revealed later this year. After that, a third unnamed vehicle will be announced the following year — though Filosa wouldn't say whether it would be a battery-electric vehicle, plug-in hybrid, or perhaps both. "It will be affordable," Filosa said, calling it "a smaller Jeep," but likely not the $25,000 model referenced by Tavares.