Oakland Tech News

Reader Input or feedback:
News@OaklandTechNews.com
To Inquire about advertising:
Ads@OaklandTechNews.com

248-856-0559

Deadline: Thursday 5:00 p.m. for the next edition of Monday.

William Springer II, publisher and interim news editor;
Lisa A. Torretta, operations

Oakland Tech News is a trademark of Springer Publishing Co., Inc. A Michigan Corporation.

www.OaklandTechNews.com

SAE Convergence: Future of Auto Technology

by Jim Stickford

A panel of OEM electronics and infotainment experts has concluded that advanced technology in cars is here to stay.

The panel discussion was held at the recent SAE Convergence 2012 gathering at Cobo Hall in downtown Detroit Oct. 17. Titled, "The Carmakers Speak," the panel was moderated by Paul Hansen, of The Hansen Report.

Panelists were Al Amici of Fiat Group Automobiles, Ricky Hudi of Audi AG, Graydon Reitz of Ford Motor Company, Wayne Powell of Toyota Motor Corporation, John Schnoes of Nissan Technical Center NA and Andrew Farah of General Motors.

Amici said cars will become more technologically complex.

He pointed out that computerized systems are used to make internal combustion engines more efficient and that's not going away. People also love "cool things" like blue tooth technology and infotainment technology, also here to stay.

Emerging technology such as vehicle to vehicle (v2v) and vehicle to individual (v2i) is in its infancy and will continue to develop, he said.

Amici noted that there are a couple of metrics that can be used to measure increased technical complexity – one being the number of computer coding lines used to make a vehicle operational, and the second being the number of apps and hardware features available. Both those numbers are going up.

That doesn't mean computerized operating components might decrease as hardware improves, he said, and these units can be combined to do more.

Farah said the public is helping drive vehicle complexity, adding that the desire for new features is only going to increase. How the OEMs meet these desires is the real challenge, he said.

When answering how OEMs are going to compete to keep revenue streams generated from infotainment systems, Hudi said the OEMs have to find ways to get the car world to work together with the consumer world.

Amici said the infotainment model is a new one and he expects there will be a shake-up in the next few years and that one or two business models will be left for everyone to use.

The key, Amici said, is for an OEM to develop something "cool" that customers will desire and didn't even know they wanted. The revenue stream will sort itself out as time goes on.

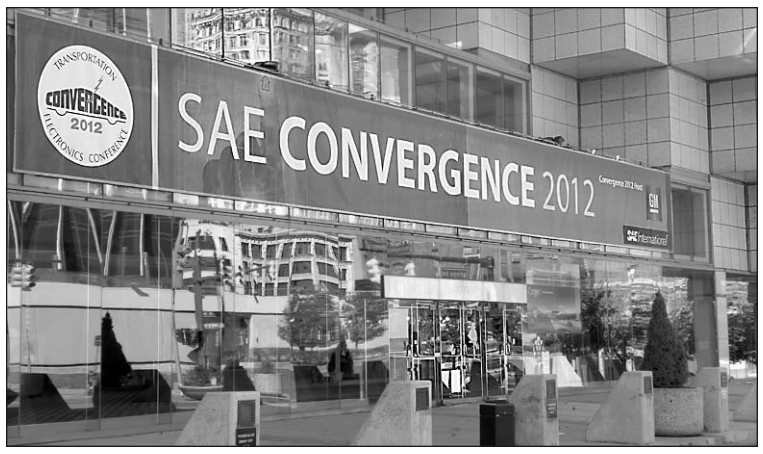
Reitz said that answer is different in different parts of the world that have different rules and regulations. Right now, he said, infotainment is a money-maker in China. But their rules are different from Europe's which are different from North America. He noted that there is no one solution that can cover these three different regions.

The panel was also asked about having systems in place to have software in vehicles automatically updated from the electronic "information cloud" without having the car go to a dealership.

Schnoes said there are definite benefits for that kind of system for both the consumer and the manufacturer, but there are also dangers.

"Anywhere you allow updates to occur automatically, it becomes a game for hackers to see how long it takes them to hack the system," Schnoes said.

This could cause serious problems for drivers, he added, as there is the potential for safety software to be compromised, or for private information to be illegally gathered from their cars.



This year's SAE Convergence event was held at Cobo Center.

Reitz said that Ford's computer guys are pushing for this, because like most computer designers, they like improving their code and they like getting the latest code out to the public.

Hudi said finding one standard for a particular technological function can be hard. Does a company adopt blue tooth tech, or Apple systems or both? Reitz said Apple wants OEMs to use wi-fi tech instead of blue tooth because Apple believes wi-fi has higher standards.

Powell agreed and said his company wished blue tooth was the final word because they've spent a lot of money on making their cars blue-tooth-compatible.

Hansen asked if the panelists saw vehicles using hardware and software to obtain information for the information cloud. Farah said some cars already do that for traffic information.

Hudi said Audi is now able to update traffic information every three minutes using cloud technology, as opposed to once every half-hour using radio techology.

But for cloud tech to really take off, he said, the infrastructure must be upgraded to make information exchange possible. He said he expects that to take about 10 years.

Chevrolet Gets Ready to Make Splash at SEMA

by Jim Stickford

Chevrolet is looking to make a big splash at the upcoming Specialty Equipment Marketing Association (SEMA) Show in Las Vegas by showing how its vehicles can be personalized by the consumer.

Jim Campbell, Chevrolet vice president of Performance Vehicles and Motorsports, said the SEMA show, to be held Oct. 30-Nov. 2, is important for Chevy.

Campbell said Chevrolet, since 1955, has been a leader in the V8 aftermarket world. Since 2010, the brand has been moving to improve its standing in the small-car market.

Last year, about two-thirds of Chevrolet's SEMA resources were dedicated to the small-car market. This year, that figure will be about 60 percent.

"Chevy has increased its small-car portfolio," Campbell said.

TI Names Dench Powertrain Head

TI Automotive has named Julian Dench to the position of global managing director – Powertrain Systems. He will be based at TI Automotive global headquarters in Auburn Hills.

Dench, 50, joins TI Automotive with more than 30 years of automotive industry sales and engineering experience. Most recently, he was vice president and global account director for TRW Automotive. He also held positions with Siemens VDO.

He earned a diploma in mechanical and production engineering from the University of East London and an MBA from the Open University, both in the United Kingdom. He is a resident of Birmingham, Mich.

TI Automotive's Powertrain Systems product group develops and produces gasoline direct-injection and diesel fuel lines and rails, along with key fluid carrying lines for turbocharger coolant systems.

Chrysler Changing Battery Chemistry in Plug-in Test Fleet

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

global director-electrified powertrain propulsion systems.

Three of the fleet's 109 pickups equipped with plug-in hybrid powertrains sustained damage when their prototype 12.9-kWh lithium-ion propulsion batteries overheated.

There were no injuries and the incidents occurred when the vehicles were unoccupied.

No similar issues have occurred with 23 plug-in hybrid minivans deployed as part of a parallel project. However, they are also being withdrawn from service for a battery upgrade.

Both projects are jointly funded by Chrysler Group and the U.S. Department of Energy.

A different battery chemistry will be used in the projects' next phase, which will focus on grid interaction and improved safety. The complexity of the engineering solution will determine how many vehicles return to service.

The PHEVs were being evaluated for durability and other attributes by 16 partner organizations – municipalities and utility companies across 20 states. The fleet accumulated more than 1.3 million miles of service in various conditions, from high-altitude Colorado to Arizona's searing desert.

A primary goal of the final phase of the program is to determine how reverse power-flow might reduce the operating costs of commercial fleets.

Some of the fleet's plug-in pickups are capable of transferring power from their batteries to the grid, which could generate revenue for fleet operators. The trucks also are able to link with each other to form independent mini-grids.

They are the first factory-built vehicles ever to feature this technology.

In addition, the pickups are the first factory-assembled Advanced Technology Partial Zero-Emissions Vehicles (ATPZEVs) to pair PHEV technology with V8 engines.

During testing, the pickups recorded peak average fuel-economy of 37.4 mpg, while the minivans delivered 55.0 mpg.

The batteries themselves are unique, marked by a high energy density that enabled weight- and size-reduction for convenient packaging.

Chrysler executive Abdullah Bazzi at Auburn Hills city hall in 2011.

The batteries also were produced without environmentally harmful NMP solvent used in most battery-manufacturing processes.

Chrysler Group is working with its partners to mitigate disruption of their operations.

Begun last year, the program is scheduled to end in 2014.

Delphi

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tech to make internal combustion engines cleaner and they are all working on electric vehicles and hybrids.

The third megatrend, she said, is connectivity – cars talking to drivers, cars talking to other cars and cars talking to infrastructure outside vehicles – technology that can update drivers on roads, weather and traffic conditions.

"Our research and development is focused on these trends," Ferris said. "It's all about what we can do to make vehicles safer, greener and better connected."

Mini-Grants Available Through Auburn Hills Foundation

The Auburn Hills Community Foundation, a nonprofit charitable organization serving people and programs located within the City of Auburn Hills, is accepting applications for grants up to $500.

The Foundation was established in 2011 to serve the interests of the Auburn Hills community, and as such, to qualify for the mini-grants, organizations and programs must serve a particular population in the city, improve the overall quality of life there, or be Auburn Hills-based or, if possible, all three at once.

Eligible programs and organizations must also be nonprofit charities, schools, or local units of government.

"Our funding comes from interest earned on Foundation investments and proceeds from fundraising and we are pleased to be in a position to offer grants to nonprofit organizations focused on Auburn Hills," said Tom Tanghe, chairman of the foundation's Board of Directors.

Aside from offering details of the mini-grants, Tange also appealed to citizens of Auburn Hills to volunteer their time and talents as members of the Board of Directors.

To request a grant application or to express interest in serving on the Board, contact Tom Tanghe at ttanghe@auburnhills-.org.

Class Helps Those With Sweet Tooth

The Auburn Hills Public Library is holding a special class on Saturday, Nov. 10, from 10:30 a.m. to noon on how to make chocolate confections.

The class is suitable for beginners and timed for the upcoming holidays. To learn more about the class and to pre-register, call the library adult services desk at 248-364-6706.

We're looking for creative and energetic writers, who are enthusiastic about business, and the automotive industry which our newspaper covers.

Oakland Tech News

If this description fits, we're looking forward to hearing from you at:

Writers@OaklandTechNews.com