

# Former GM Factory Recycled

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) – A startup car company called Elio Motors is moving into the former General Motors plant in Shreveport, where it plans to build three-wheeled, low-price vehicles.

The deal, announced on Jan. 3, is for Elio to take over part of the plant to assemble its unusual-looking, two-seat vehicle. The company said the vehicle averages 65 miles per gallon and will sell for \$6,800 when commercial production begins in mid-2014.

“We can't wait to begin our journey in Louisiana,” Paul Elio, CEO of Elio Motors, said in a statement.

The Phoenix-based company said it would hire 1,500 workers by late 2015, reviving a plant that once built pickup trucks and the commercial Hummer. The Shreveport plant would be Elio's first manufacturing location.

The plant has been closed since late August. GM had handed it over to a trust, the RACER Trust, that took over dozens of GM-owned facilities after the company declared bankruptcy.

Industrial developer Stuart Lichter is buying the entire facility in conjunction with Elio and hopes to lease portions of the site to other tenants.

Details of the sale, including the purchase price, weren't provided. Lichter said that Elio will use about one-quarter of the four-million-square-foot facility

and that he currently has no other tenants yet.

To secure the deal, Louisiana offered a package of tax breaks to Elio Motors that includes a payroll rebate of 13 percent for the first 10 years of plant operations. The state economic development department didn't immediately provide an estimate of what such a tax break could cost, but it could reach millions annually if all 1,500 jobs are eligible for the rebate.

“After the loss of GM, we made a commitment to the people of Northwest Louisiana that we would not only pursue possible alternative uses for the old GM facility, but we would also aggressively pursue new projects in the region that would create new job opportunities,” Gov. Bobby Jindal said in a statement. Elio Motors has been taking reservations for the egg-shaped vehicle, called the Elio. First delivery is projected for mid-2014.

A similar, previous announcement of a start-up automaker for Northeast Louisiana fell through a few years ago. The V-Vehicle Co., later known as Next Autotworks Co., proposed converting a former headlight plant in Monroe into an auto assembly facility. But the plans hinged on millions in federal loans that were never approved by the U.S. Department of Energy.

No federal money is involved in the Elio project.

# Rear Seat Occupant Safety Moves to Front As TRW Displays New Technology at Show

Technology to enhance the safety of rear seat passengers has taken on an urgent priority, and TRW Automotive Holdings has made use of the Airbag 2012 show to showcase its advanced occupant restraint technology.

The TRW display also served to inform its audience about opportunities to improve rear seat safety.

What's driving the push for new safety technology are more stringent safety standards planned by the Euro New Car Assessment Program (NCAP).

Dirk Schultz, engineering director, TRW Inflatable Restraint Systems, noted in recent years occupant protection for drivers and passengers has improved significantly, mainly due to NCAP regulatory changes.

But the level and sophistication of available safety features on front and rear seats can vary on many vehicles.

“With Euro NCAP planning to introduce a new ratings scheme in 2015 that focuses more stringently on rear seat safety for a wider range of occupant sizes, this situation is about to change,” said Schultz.

“From 2015 on, tests will focus on older and larger children who use booster seats (Q6 and Q10 child dummies), as well as smaller and lighter adults (HIII 5 percent dummies),” he said. “To maintain a five-star rating, vehicle manufacturers will have to meet the more stringent standards set for rear seat occupants.

As a leader in the development and manufacture of airbags and seat belts, TRW is well-placed to support its customers

in offering best-in-class rear seat safety.”

At the show, the Livonia-based Tier I supplier is exhibiting several innovative solutions, including its Active Buckle Lifter (ABL) seat belt system.

This new system helps users to fasten their seat belts. The enhanced technology is slated to start production on rear seats in 2013 with a yet-to-be-named major European vehicle manufacturer.

Other key technologies TRW is showing at Airbag 2012 include its roof airbag, a rear seat concept as part of TRW's acrylic car display.

The new system is due to start production in 2014 in a front seat configuration, but TRW is already exploring how the technology can be used to further improve protection for rear seat passengers.

Another new system is TRW's Dynamic Locking Tongue (DLT) seat belt innovation, which can help reduce loads on the occupant's chest by clamping the webbing.

The company expects that these kinds of systems can help meet future NCAP requirements for rear seat passenger protection.

“We have several advanced Occupant Safety System (OSS) technologies already in development and production,” said Schultz, “that can support our customers in fitting the right technology – be it in front or rear seating positions – to help maintain their desired star rating.”

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## Powertrain's Hensel Is Recognized For Club GM's Effort with Charities

Barry Hensel, a senior designer at the GM Powertrain Headquarters in Pontiac, was just named Club GM's Contact Person of the Year for 2012.

Hensel said he's been a member of the club for about a decade and that the title, contact person, has a particular meaning in Club GM.

“A lot of people do a lot of different things in the club,” Hensel said. “Many of us are classified as ‘contact people.’ For example, I am the contact person at the Pontiac powertrain HQ. That means if someone wants to buy Auto Show tickets through the club, they'd contact me.”

Hensel said that he is known within the club for selling tickets to the North American International Auto Show and cards for Meals on Wheels.

“I actually got started in the club a decade ago when I found out the club sold Auto Show tickets. I was based in Ypsilanti back then and I called up Len Wermette and said I'd be willing to sell tickets myself.

“He said OK and gave me 200 tickets to sell. I sold them in a week and came back and asked if he had any more tickets for me to sell, and he said, ‘Sure.’ It took off from there.

“By my second or third year, I sold 1,100 tickets. That's what started me down this path.”

Hensel said this is the second time he was named Contact Person of the Year. The first time was back in 2004. He said he is only the third person to be so honored. Last year, he sold more than 1,200 Auto Show tickets.

Hensel is married to Margaret and they have three children – Heather, Julie and Michael.

In addition to selling the Auto Show tickets, Hensel also sells Meals on Wheels cards at \$5 each. All the proceeds go toward the Meals on Wheels program. He sells the cards around Easter and the Thanksgiving-to-Christmas holiday season.

“Club GM supports about 50 different charities,” Hensel said. “At the November board meeting alone, we talked about giving out \$12,000 just for Christmas. When I sell an Auto Show ticket for \$9, we get to keep \$1.”

And, Hensel said, he runs the Club GM store in the Pontiac powertrain building. It's new and one of three club stores that have been placed in GM buildings. They sell branded items like mugs, key chains and T-shirts. The Pontiac powertrain T-shirts, \$30 or \$32, depending on size, have proved to be particularly popular.

The club also maintains stores at the Vehicle Engineering Center (VEC) and the Design Staff building at the GM Tech Center in Warren.

Hours vary by each store. The Pontiac store is currently open three days a week.

“The next thing for me is to keep doing what I'm doing, as far as I'm concerned,” Hensel said. “I just turned 58 and expect to work at GM for another four or five years. I've been with the company for 28 years this February.”



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