

Experts Discuss Preparations for Auto Industry’s Future

by Jim Stickford

Macomb Community College’s Center for Advanced Automotive Technology (CAAT) held a seminar on May 30 in which experts discussed how manufacturers, government and academia are preparing for the future of the auto industry.

Among the speakers was Jay Baron, president and CEO of the Center for Automotive Research, who talked about Michigan’s future in automotive development.

“Michigan is where the engineers are,” Baron said. “There’s a real cluster of knowledge.

“I spoke with someone who worked for a manufacturer and he said that people don’t come to Michigan for the low costs, they come for the knowledge.”

Baron said this person pointed out that some off-shore manufacturers have set up factories in low-wage states in the South, but when there is a complex problem to be solved, those same manufacturers consult with their engineering teams in Michigan because of their knowledge.

That kind of cluster of knowledge and expertise is very valuable to the state in general and the Detroit area specifically, and efforts should be made in schools and government to keep that advantage, said Baron.

Baron was asked how OEMs can help feed the worker pipeline so that young people today obtain the skills they will need for tomorrow’s jobs in the automotive landscape.

Part of the problem, Baron said, is that when students are exposed to “cool” engineering situations, they become enthusiastic about engineering. But that

exposure doesn’t happen often enough.

“I don’t know why more students aren’t exposed to engineering,” Baron said. “It’s not like there aren’t good engineering jobs out there. We may have high unemployment, but we still can’t find enough of the right-skilled workers.

“I don’t think there’s a machine shop in the state that’s not looking for a good tool-and-die maker. We need to get the pipeline filled.”

When asked about China, Baron said that they have a lot of talented engineers, many of whom were trained here in the U.S. It’s a big car market that is only going to get bigger, and it is a competitive automotive market as well, he said.

“I would be concerned about them (engineers),” Baron said. “To stay competitive, we need factories, which are used as R&D centers, and we need academia to work together.”

Baron said that if Michigan wants to stay a major automotive center in the world, that’s what has to happen.

Mac Lister, program manager, Knowledge and Technology Transfer – ITS Program Office, U.S. Department of Transportation, spoke about Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

“ITS is an umbrella term for a variety of technology,” Lister said. “That includes smart traffic signals and sensor technology to traffic management systems and toll-paying technology.”

ITS tech, Lister said, can help reduce traffic snarls and traffic accidents. He noted that about 33,000 people a year are killed in traffic accidents, so there is a

great incentive for states to adopt as much of this tech as possible.

He added that ITS will work using vehicle to vehicle (V2V) tech and vehicle to infrastructure (V2I) equipment. By having cars “talk” to each other, accidents can be headed off before they happen. V2I tech can warn drivers when they drift out of their lanes or when the route ahead is blocked.

Right now, the U.S. Department of Transportation is testing various ITS technology in Ann Arbor using 2,800 vehicles, including cars, trucks and buses.

The test vehicles can interact with each other and the V2I tech that has been placed throughout the Ann Arbor area.

Once the data is collected, it will have to be analyzed, Lister said. Then the federal government can make recommendations on what has to be done.

“The question becomes should technology be required to be placed in vehicles and infrastructure,” Lister said. “We must look at the cost benefits of such requirements. If this decision is made in the next couple of years, it would explode the industry.

“My opinion is that this technology will be adopted over time regardless of what the government does because people want to be safe in their cars.”

Dominic DiCicco, principal environmental engineer at Ford, quoted Malcolm X, who said, “The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.” He also quoted Bill Ford, Jr., who said that improved automotive performance is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Ford is committed to doing its



Dominic DiCicco

“We can’t let the competition develop technology ahead of us,” DiCicco said, adding that performance, cost and ease of use will persuade the public which systems to adopt, meaning that the OEMs need to be ready for anything and everything.

Local Author Shares Father’s War Stories

The Warren Public Library is inviting the public to meet Teresa K. Irish, author and editor of “A Thousand Letters Home: One WWII Soldier’s Story of War, Love, and Life” on Monday, June 17, at 6 p.m., in the Civic Center Library.

After her father died, Irish found packets of letters he wrote during his time in World War II. Her book is composed of selections from her father’s original letters placed into historical context with excerpts from the book “102nd Thru Germany” (published by the division in 1945).

“A Thousand Letters Home” was named Reviewer’s Choice by *Midwest Book Review* and *Small Press Bookwatch*.

The Military Writers Society of America placed “A Thousand Letters Home” on its 2013 recommended reading list. The Society called Irish’s book “a fascinating book” and “a treasure trove.”

Those attending the event will have the opportunity to meet Teresa K. Irish and hear the story of her father’s experiences in the 102nd Infantry Division during World War II.

Books will be available to be purchased and signed at this event. To register, call 586-574-4564.

The program is sponsored by American House Senior Living Communities.

The library staff also points out that all Warren Public Library locations are closed Sundays from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The Warren Civic Center Library will resume Sunday hours on Sunday, Sept. 8.

There will also be a D-Day anniversary remembrance event at the Arthur Miller Branch of the Warren Library on Thursday, June 6, beginning at 10 a.m.

Call 596-751-5377 to reserve a seat in advance.



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