

Ford Increases 12 Points in U.S. EV Market

There's a lot going on over at the Dearborn automaker these days.

Last year, Ford's share of the U.S. electrified vehicle market quadrupled.

And while that was going on, the company introduced improvements to the on-road fuel economy performance of its hybrid vehicles – and hired new engineers – and even expanded its research facilities for expected continued growth.

“Strong consumer acceptance of Ford hybrids shows that our plan to lead in fuel economy across our lineup is working,” said Raj Nair, group vice president, Global Product Development. “Our commitment to deliver great fuel economy in our cars, utilities and trucks is a key reason we are seeing strong growth in coastal markets and with import buyers.”

This year, Ford's share of the U.S. electrified vehicle market is up 12 share points to nearly 16 percent, while Toyota's share is down 8 share points, and more customers are trading in their Priuses for the new Ford C-MAX Hybrid.

Ford reported electrified vehicle sales of 46,197 units through June – 400-plus percent higher than the same period a year ago.

The Ford C-MAX Hybrid and Ford C-MAX Energi plug-in hybrid are helping drive this growth. Meanwhile, the Ford brand had the largest retail share increase in California of any brand during the first five months of 2013.

Last month, 64 percent of C-MAX Hybrid buyers came from non-Ford brands. In fact, the vehicle most traded in for a Ford C-MAX is the Toyota Prius.

Strong demand has led Lincoln to increase the production mix of MKZ Hybrid to 40 percent of MKZ production, up from 20 percent.

Electrified vehicles are part of

a larger Ford success story, said Todd Nissen, manager of Ford Corporate Communications. The company's strong product lineup has led to Ford's U.S. market share growing at a faster rate than competitors, said Nissen – gaining nearly a full percentage point in the first half of the year.

Consumer demand is strong across the company's lineup – with its fuel-efficient cars, utilities and trucks all showing gains this year, Nissen said.

Ford Fusion has seen record sales for the first half of the year, and Escape continues to be the best-selling utility in America – posting record sales the last five months.

Overall, Nissen said, Ford is on track to be the best-selling brand of utility vehicles for three straight years. Ford F-Series has been America's best-selling pickup for 36 straight years.

As its electrified vehicle market share grows, Ford also is taking action to improve the on-road fuel economy performance of 2013-model hybrid vehicles in the United States and Canada, Nissen said. Starting in August, the company will make calibration updates designed to improve on-road fuel economy for owners of the 2013 Ford C-MAX Hybrid, 2013 Ford Fusion Hybrid and 2013 Lincoln MKZ Hybrid.

“We are committed to continuously improving fuel economy of our vehicles,” said Nair. “We believe these actions will provide our customers enhanced on-road fuel economy satisfaction.”

Calibration updates to Ford hybrid vehicles include control system enhancements for a variety of driving conditions on the highway, during short trips and while using the climate control system. Those designed to improve customer satisfaction include:

- Increasing the maximum pure electric speed to 85 mph

from 62 mph, allowing increased use of electric-only mode;

- Optimizing the use of Active Grille Shutters to reduce aerodynamic drag under more driving and temperature conditions, including cold weather, air conditioner use and when the engine coolant temperature is higher;

- Reducing the electric fan speed as a function of coolant temperature to minimize the fan's energy consumption;

- Shortening engine warm-up time by up to 50 percent to enable electric-only driving and engine shutdown at stops sooner after cold starts;

- Optimizing the climate control system to minimize use of the air conditioning compressor and reduce the energy used in cold weather.

“Just as individual mileage can vary based on driving styles and environmental conditions, we expect fuel economy improvements will differ from customer to customer depending on individual driving habits,” said Nair. “Customers should see the most improvement at highway speeds, during air conditioner use and operation in colder climates.”

This year, Ford also will expand its electrification engineering team by nearly 50 percent, growing to 500 salaried employees. Further, the automaker is investing an additional \$50 million in electrified product development and testing centers in Dearborn.

Ford will double electrification battery-testing capabilities by the end of the year – to a total of 160 individual battery-test cells – helping to speed hybrid and electric vehicle development by as much as 25 percent, Nair said.

“This investment in new engineers and expanded facilities helps us prepare for growth,” said Nair.

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Sonic: Color Me Purple... or Plum... or Magenta Metallic

The 2014 Chevrolet Sonic will be available in two limited-edition colors as the brand continues to scour design products seeking the “individualist” consumer.

“We know that about one-third of our Sonic buyers note exterior color as an ‘extremely important’ factor in their purchase process – a higher percentage than other small car buyers,” said Michelle Killen, lead creative designer in General Motors’ color and trim studio and exterior paint expert for Chevrolet.

A chromatic plum called Deep Magenta Metallic is the first in the series and will be available August through October.

When it came time to replace Inferno Orange, the design team realized pink was a lasting trend, and after the success of Chevrolet Spark's Techno Pink, the team wanted to bring a more chromatic tone to showroom floors. It accents Sonic's shape to perfection.

“Color is simply energy: it is a universal language that everyone instinctively understands, and yet it can also mean different things to each individual,” said Isham Sardouk, chief creative officer of Stylesight, a New York fashion trends forecasting company.

Chevrolet developed Deep Magenta Metallic after extensive research into fashion runways, consumer products and high-end furniture galleries.

The color shifts in this magenta tone will show Sonic's form vocabulary, essentially the shape of the car, as it drives down the road.

“A car in a distinctive color is really the ultimate statement

piece, especially to my generation who is now embracing metallic across their wardrobes, furniture and accessories,” said Justin Livingston, color trend expert and founder of fashion blog, “Scout Sixteen.”

“The Chevrolet Sonic in Deep Metallic Magenta expresses an individual's personality and tells people that they embrace style. Plus this richer magenta tone works against a lot of skin tones and is practical for anyone who's willing to take a risk – both male and female.”

On average, a Chevrolet vehicle has 10 to 12 color options throughout its lifecycle.

The limited edition colors will be applied with the “three-wet” paint process at GM's Orion Assembly Plant.

The technique ensures high quality while reducing environmental impact. And it reduces the plant's paint shop footprint by 10 percent.

GM was the first automaker to use the process, in which three layers of paint are applied one after another without drying, thus requiring only a single trip through the oven.

GM officials announced that Cool Blue – a greyish, dirty blue – will follow the Deep Magenta Metallic, and will be available on Sonic from November until March.

Dragon Green will come to the lineup as a permanent addition to the Sonic palette the first quarter of 2014.

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