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## GM Will Offer Bi-Fuel on 2015 Impalas

General Motors will build a Chevrolet Impala sedan for retail and fleet customers that operates on either gasoline or compressed natural gas (CNG), said GM Chairman and CEO Dan Akerson.

Expected to go on sale next summer as a 2015 model, it will be the only manufacturer-produced full-size bi-fuel sedan, Akerson said.

He made the announcement Oct. 16 at an energy summit in Washington, D.C. The summit meeting marked the 40th anni-

versary of the OPEC oil embargo.

The event – “OPEC Oil Embargo + 40: A National Summit on Energy Security” – was sponsored by the nonpartisan group, Securing America’s Future Energy, or SAFE. Prominent political, business and military leaders assessed the current state of America’s oil dependence since the 1973 oil embargo.

Akerson said the bi-fuel Impala is an example of using affordable technology to reduce oil consumption and save consumers money at the pump.

“We know that U.S. energy security won’t come from a one-off moonshot,” Akerson said. “It will flow from our systematic investment in technology and innovation . . . our drive to get more from existing energy sources and renewables . . . our commitment to conservation . . . and it will be assured by fully and safely exploiting our shale gas reserves.”

Natural gas is a cleaner-burning transportation fuel compared with petroleum products, and



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GM's Dan Akerson unveils the 2015 CNG-capable, bi-fuel Impala.

## 2013 Ram 3500 ST Crew Cab Donated to Feed Hungry

Equipment donations by Ram Trucks is making it possible for Forgotten Harvest, the metro Detroit food rescue organization, to provide millions of meals to people who would otherwise go hungry in Southeastern Michigan.

“In three years of harvesting fresh food from farms ourselves, we’ve gone from 100,000 pounds of food to 440,000 pounds to an estimated 850,000 pounds this year,” said Forgotten Harvest President & CEO Susan Goodell.

“One of our greatest barriers to further growth was the lack of equipment to support our staff

and volunteers – and today, Ram Truck, Case IH and New Holland have delivered what we need to keep growing our farming operations to feed hungry families in need.”

Forgotten Harvest currently has 75 acres of land under cultivation, thanks to a lease donation by Forgotten Harvest board member and long-time supporter Nora Moroun, in memory of her grandmother Nora Langan, Goodell said. The equipment donation will allow Forgotten Harvest to expand its operations at Ore Creek Farm.



This Ram 3500 HD is helping expansion of Forgotten Harvest's farming.

Ram Truck is donating a 2013 Ram 3500 ST Crew Cab Heavy Duty 4x4 to transport people, equipment and materials around the farm operations, said Chrysler

spokesman Kevin Frazier. “The Ram Truck brand has a great deal of respect for the work

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## ‘Franchise Dealer System Benefits Consumer’ – NADA Chief

by Jim Stickford

It took hundreds of billions of dollars to build the franchise car dealer system and it would cost hundreds of billions of dollars more to develop something to replace it – and the big loser, if that should happen, would be the consumer.

That was the message from David Westcott, chairman of the National Automobile Dealers Association at the recent Automotive Press Association luncheon at the Detroit Athletic Club.

In his address to the media, Westcott said that getting rid of the franchise system would eliminate something that really benefits the consumer – competition.

The franchise system allows 30 manufacturers to sell 300 different models.

“We dealers are mostly small businesses – men and women who, on average, employ about 50 people from our local community. We spend our days and nights competing with each other. This keeps us customer-focused.

“If manufacturers were allowed to squeeze out the independent dealers, the competition we create will give way to a handful of national and international corporations controlling pricing in your local community because there will no longer be intra-brand competition.”

He said that’s not meant to be a shot against “our hometown” automakers. He said he believes that after trying alternatives to the franchise system a decade ago, the U.S. OEMs are happy to rely on the franchise system.

“They recognize and appreciate that the franchise system provides the framework and sta-

bility for an industry that accounts for almost a trillion dollars in commerce each year,” Westcott said. “The franchise system creates competition and the consumer is the primary beneficiary. That’s why all 50 states have enacted some sort of a dealer franchise law.”

And as small, local businesses, franchise dealers play an important role in the local economy.

“The auto industry continues to lead the economic recovery,” Westcott said.

“Auto sales are approaching pre-recession levels, and at this rate, dealers may end up selling close to 16 million new vehicles this year.”

These franchise dealers are close to again employing 1 million people in the country with jobs that can’t be exported overseas. But even though things are looking up, dealers have their share of challenges, Westcott said.

While many in the public still hold stereotyped views of new-car dealers, Westcott said that, according to J.D. Power, customer satisfaction with dealerships is at an all-time high.

Any system that would replace the franchise way of doing things would have to offer cash for trade-ins, offer the same wide va-

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David Westcott

## New Lab to Give Ford a ‘Stepping Stone’ Between Battery Research and Production

A new \$8 million battery lab opened Oct. 14 at the University of Michigan that will help Ford develop batteries that are smaller, lighter and less expensive to produce.

The research at the new lab could accelerate development of batteries that are more efficient and affordable than the batteries used in today’s models, allowing vehicles to go farther on a single charge, said Ford spokesperson Amanda Zusman.

The lab is a battery manufacturing facility designed to support pilot projects. State-of-the-art manufacturing methods will be used to make test batteries that replicate the performance of full-scale production batteries, allowing for faster implementation in future production vehicles, Zusman said.

“We have battery labs that test and validate production-ready batteries, but that is too late in the development process for us to get our first look,” said Ted Miller, who manages battery research for Ford.

“This lab will give us a stepping-stone between the research lab and the production environment, and a chance to have input much earlier in the development process. This is sorely needed, and no one else in the auto industry has anything like it.”

The lab is the result of collaboration between Ford, battery suppliers, the University of Michigan, and the state and federal governments, and it holds the potential for major advancements in extending battery life and durability, said Zusman.

Ford, the only automaker to in-

vest in the facility, contributed \$2.1 million. Other investors include the University of Michigan, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the U.S. Department of Energy.

Ford has been supporting battery research for more than 20 years, Zusman said. Last year, the company invested \$135 million in design, engineering and production of key battery components, and doubled its battery testing capabilities.

Ford was able to accelerate durability testing, with test batteries now accumulating 150,000 miles and 10 years’ life in about 10 months.

Even so, battery development is in its infancy, and more research is needed, said Miller.

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## WID Promotes STEM to Local High School Girls

by Jim Stickford

The Michigan Chapter of Women In Defense (WID) is looking for a few good women to consider majoring in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

To that end, WID on Oct. 15 took 32 female students on a tour of the RAVE Cave, a facility in Sterling Heights that creates a 3-D environment in which engineers can test prototype vehicles in a simulated environment.

Denice Gerstenberg is the local WID chapter’s STEM director. Her day job is City Development manager for Sterling Heights. She said WID is interested in helping develop the next generation of defense industry leaders, especially women.

“So every year we try to put on a field trip to a defense-related business to show young women what’s out there for them,” Gerstenberg said. “Two years ago, we visited General Dynamics, and last year we visited BAE Systems. This year, it’s the RAVE Cave. And there will be a tour of Wyle, a company that provides tech services to life science and information service industries.”

Wyle is located in the same building complex as the RAVE Cave, Gerstenberg said.

The Army’s TARDEC had people at the RAVE event to show the students how the Army uses the facility to test its vehicles.

“The students came from a variety of schools,” Gerstenberg said, “including Utica, Newaygo and Mount Clemens public schools. Altogether, we had 32 young ladies attend. We could have five field trips worth of women go to this event, but we can only have five to seven people at a time in the RAVE Cave, so we had to limit the number of people we could take.”

The students who attended the event are all in high school, Gerstenberg said. The president of RAVE Cave, Art Adlam, spoke to the ladies. And, they got to meet with two women – Doris Block-Tomlinson, CEO of Danas Technology, and Rosemary Bayer, founder of Ardent Cause – who have started their own defense-related businesses.

The whole idea behind the tour was to let young women know that there is opportunity for them if they decide to pursue a STEM-based education, Gerstenberg said.

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