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New Lab to Give Ford a Battery ‘Stepping Stone’

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teries 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.

He added, “Just as critical is the need for new chemistries to be assessed in a credible cell format,” which means small-scale battery cells can be tested in place of full-scale production batteries without compromising the test results.

“It is way too early in the battery race to commit to one type of battery chemistry,” said Miller. “In the span of 15 years, the industry has gone from lead-acid to nickel-metal-hydride to the lithium-ion batteries used in Ford C-MAX and Ford Fusion hybrids on the road today. Others in the auto industry have placed their bets, but we are convinced a better solution will require input from a multitude of partners.”

Ford’s electrified vehicle lineup includes five models equipped with advanced lithium-ion batteries. Earlier-generation vehicles featured nickel-metal-hydride batteries, Zusan said. Lithium-ion batteries are about 25 percent to 30 percent smaller, and can provide about three times the power per cell of nickel-metal-hydride batteries.

Miller said locating the lab on a university campus will be a draw for battery suppliers to work on complex problems in a common environment. “We need to work on these problems together in a neutral lab setting,” he said. “This way, we all win. I think you are going to see a lot of companies in the battery supply chain come to Michigan to use this facility, in very short order.

“This is important for the state of Michigan, too,” Miller added. “Previous investments have been focused on battery production, and now our state becomes a research core for batteries.

“The University of Michigan benefits, because the best and brightest from car companies, suppliers and academia will come here. In turn, that will attract the best students.

“We need to nurture the next generation of battery scientists.”

Camaro Z/28 Runs Circles Around Lamborghini, Porsche

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7.0L LS7 engine, Doran said. The LS7 uses lightweight, racing-proven, high-performance components, such as titanium intake valves and connecting rods, CNC-ported aluminum cylinder heads and a forged-steel crankshaft to help produce an SAE-certified 505 horsepower and 481 lb.-ft. of torque. Air-conditioning is available, but only as an option.

A close-ratio six-speed manual transmission is the only transmission offered and power is distributed to the rear wheels via a limited-slip differential featuring a helical gear set, rather than traditional clutch packs.

The new design enables the driver to apply more power and get through corners faster, Doran said, by making the most of the capability of individual-wheel antilock brake function during corner entry braking, mid-corner speed and corner-exit traction.

The team spent a week at the Nürburgring as part of the Z/28’s performance-validation regimen, accumulating a total of 10 hours and nearly 1,000 miles on the track. Each lap took less than eight minutes to complete, despite having to overtake slower traffic at times, Doran said.

The hours on the track are part of the grueling 24-hour test, which simulates a full year’s worth of track use or amateur-level competition at the hands of an owner.

“Passing the 24-hour test is a requirement for all cars we call ‘track capable,’” said Wayne McConnell, director of Global Vehicle Performance. “The test pushes the car at 10/10ths (full bore for both car and driver) on the track for a total of 24 hours. During the test, the only mechanical

changes allowed are replacing the brakes and tires.”

The 24-hour test is broken into a number of segments over the course of several days – and even at different tracks – to evaluate performance in precisely measured and carefully monitored increments. Crucially, each valid test lap must be run within 2 percent of a target lap speed to count toward the 24-hour total.

The 24-hour test was first used in the early 1990s for the fourth-generation Corvette. Back then, the 300-horsepower Corvette was Chevrolet’s most powerful vehicle, and the 24-hour test measured 15 channels of data.

Today, the 2014 Camaro LS offers a 323-horsepower V6, while the Camaro Z/28’s racing-proven LS7 7.0L small-block V8 delivers 505 horsepower, and the 24-hour test measures 130 channels of data.

“Our cars’ performance and capability have advanced tremendously in the past 20 years, which required us to continually improve the parameters of the 24-hour test,” said McConnell.

“Today’s test pushes the car harder than the vast majority of customers ever will. As a result, when we call a car ‘track capable,’ we are confident that it will perform reliably and consistently for our customers.”

GKN Driveline Named Finalist For PACE Award

GKN Driveline, based in Auburn Hills, has been named as a finalist for an Automotive News PACE award after it placed its advanced All-Wheel Drive Disconnect System in the 2014 Range Rover Evoque earlier this year. The e-system monitors vehicle dynamics and automatically reconnects four-wheel drive (within 300 milliseconds) whenever it is needed.

GKN Driveline engineered the GKN All-Wheel Drive Disconnect System to improve fuel efficiency while retaining dynamic agility, enhanced traction and outstanding off-road performance, said a company spokesman.

“We are delighted to receive this nomination,” said Rob Rickell, Engineering director, GKN Driveline. “Engineering innovation is at the heart of GKN Driveline and our global teams work hard to push the boundaries of driveline technology.”

The 34 finalists for the award were announced at the SAE global leadership conference in mid-October.

The co-development of the Active Driveline, said Rickell, contributes to the 2014 Range Rover Evoque’s fuel consumption reduction of up to 11.4 percent. The step change, he said, in vehicle efficiency and performance sets a new benchmark for this type of vehicle.

ALTe to Install 3,000 Hybrid Powertrains

ALTe Powertrain Technologies (ALTe), the developer of the first plug-in electric hybrid vehicle powertrain system for light commercial vehicles and independent producer of new energy powertrain systems in China, crossed a significant milestone in its international business development strategy on Oct. 8, said ALTe CEO John Thomas.

Together with its Joint Venture (JV) partner Henan Benma Company, Ltd., ALTe held its first official JV Board meeting after receiving formal Chinese government approval for the joint venture, Thomas said. The enterprise is officially named “Henan ALTe New Energy Automobile

Company Ltd.” based in Change City of the Henan province in central China, Thomas said.

As a result, the joint venture is now in possession and able to execute \$209 million of purchase orders for the ALTe patented plug-in electric hybrid powertrains, Thomas said.

The powertrains will be installed in 3,000 light commercial vehicle units in China starting in April 2014. A U.S. launch should follow closely, Thomas said.

In connection with the formation of the Henan ALTe Joint Venture in China, Citibank Commercial Banking Group approved a multimillion-dollar line of credit for ALTe in the U.S., facilitated

by a commitment made by ALTe’s JV partner in China.

ALTe has one of the only viable qualifying technologies for use in a wide array of commercial vehicles and passenger cars in China, which currently benefit from a significant subsidy to accelerate adoption of new energy vehicles in China, which has an impressive goal of 5,000,000 plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles by the year 2020, Thomas said.

“ALTe’s technology will help the country reach that goal at an accelerated pace,” Thomas said.

The Henan Benma Company was founded in 1952 in China and started producing farm equipment in the 1980s.

Franchise Dealer System Benefits Consumers – NADA Chief

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would have to offer cash for trade-ins, offer the same wide variety of financing options that dealers do, perform all warranty and safety recall work at no cost to the buyer, maintain the inventory of parts that dealers do (\$500,000 on average) and collect and pay all taxes associated with the selling of a new car.

“In other words, dealers provide essential services, either required by states or demanded by the customer,” Westcott said.

The Internet has changed the way people shop and forced dealers to adopt new ways to interact with customers.

“That is why I can say unequivocally that the independent dealer franchise system is the most efficient and cost-effective way of selling and servicing vehicles anywhere, and that’s why after more than 100 years, it is stronger than ever,” Westcott said.

He also said he’s worried about the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). He said the agency’s policy of creating a “fair lending” guidance program to eliminate dealer-negoti-

ated financing and replace it with a flat fee would prevent dealers from discounting any financing they may offer.

The CFPB promised transparency in the setting up of rules, but Westcott said he hasn’t seen any. He said he understands the importance of giving every customer fair and equal treatment, but the regulating agency that decides policy needs to set that policy in a transparent way, and that’s not happening.

“Our goal is to meet the transportation needs of all our customers in an open and honest manner,” Westcott said. “And this includes working so that consumers can continue to have access to affordable credit.”

After his speech, Westcott was asked about the Tesla way of selling cars. He said that the Tesla is a good car but that even people at the company have admitted that once sales reach a critical mass, they will have to use some sort of franchise system.

Westcott was also asked about

“Obamacare” and how it might affect the healthcare provided by dealers. He said some dealers might decide to eliminate healthcare and pay the fine, but that a dealership’s employees are its best assets and that would be penny-wise, but pound-foolish.



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