

Ford, Universities Partner for Safer Autonomous Driving

Building on the automated Ford Fusion Hybrid research vehicle unveiled last month, Ford is entering into new projects with Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University.

The projects are designed to research and develop solutions to some of the technical challenges surrounding automated driving.

Automated driving is a key component of Ford's Blueprint for Mobility, which outlines what transportation will look like in 2025 and beyond, along with the technologies, business models and partnerships needed to get there.

With its automated Fusion Hybrid research vehicle, Ford is exploring potential solutions for the longer-term societal, legislative and technological issues posed by a future of fully automated driving.

"To deliver on our vision for the future of mobility, we need to work with many new partners across the public and private sectors, and we need to start today," said Paul Mascarenas, chief technical officer and vice president, Ford Research and Innovation.

"Working with university partners like MIT and Stanford en-

ables us to address some of the longer-term challenges surrounding automated driving while exploring more near-term solutions for delivering an even safer and more efficient driving experience."

Ford's automated Fusion Hybrid research vehicle is unique in that it first uses the same technology already in Ford vehicles in dealer showrooms, then adds four LiDAR sensors to generate a real-time 3D map of the vehicle's surrounding environment.

While the vehicle can sense objects around it using the LiDAR sensors, Ford's research with MIT uses advanced algorithms to help the vehicle learn to predict where moving vehicles and pedestrians could be in the future.

This scenario planning provides the vehicle with a better sense of the surrounding risks, enabling it to plan a path that will safely avoid pedestrians, vehicles and other moving objects.

Working with Stanford, Ford is exploring how the sensors could see around obstacles. Typically, when a driver's view is blocked by an obstacle like a big truck, the driver will maneuver within the lane to take a peek around it and see what is ahead.

Similarly, this research would enable the sensors to "take a peek ahead" and make evasive maneuvers if needed. For example, if the truck ahead slammed on its brakes, the vehicle would know if the area around it is clear to safely change lanes.

"Our goal is to provide the vehicle with common sense," said Greg Stevens, global manager for

Driver Assistance and Active Safety, Ford Research and Innovation.

"Drivers are good at using the cues around them to predict what will happen next, and they know that what you can't see is often as important as what you can see.

"Our goal in working with MIT and Stanford is to bring a similar type of intuition to the vehicle."



Automated Fusion hybrid research vehicle being tested.

For Ford, Charity Begins with New \$300,000 Mustang

A Texas Ford dealer had the chance to be number one and help charity on Jan. 18.

At Barrett-Jackson Auction Company's sale in Scottsdale, Ariz., car collector and North Texas Ford dealer Sam Pack paid \$300,000 to have the first retail production unit of the all-new 2015 Mustang GT when it goes on sale this fall.

Money raised by that sale went to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), increasing Ford Motor Company's charity vehicle sales to more than \$3.5 million for JDRF, a Ford partner since 1983. Ford Motor has a long history of donating to the JDRF.

Also at the auction, a Shelby GT500-inspired 1956 Ford F-100 sold for an impressive \$450,000, bought by Gordie Broda of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada.

That amount was donated to the "Wheels of Dreams" project, a program created to raise monies for the new Children's Hospital of Saskatchewan in Canada.

After the Mustang's debut in April 1964, the car's sales literature called it "the car designed to be designed by you." This year's winning bidder has that opportunity for his new car. Pack will choose either a manual or automatic transmission, as well as any interior and exterior color combination offered on the 2015 Ford Mustang GT.

Furthermore, the team involved in Mustang design and development will sign the car in appreciation of the donation to JDRF.

"The response to the all-new Mustang GT on the auction block was remarkable," says Raj Nair, Ford's group vice president – Global Product Development.

"People were drawn to the opportunity to own this historic car, while also knowing the funds would benefit JDRF. We're pleased to continue this collaboration in the fight to cure type 1 diabetes."

Powered by a V8, the Mustang GT features upgrades that yield more than 420 horsepower and 390 lb.-ft. of torque, Nair said. The Mustang also features new front and rear independent suspension systems.

New technologies, said Nair, also provide enhanced information, control and connectivity when drivers want it, including launch control that enables smooth and consistent starts when desired.

"We are thrilled with the result

of the auction," said John Brady, incoming JDRF chairman.

"The enthusiasm and generosity of Ford Motor Company and Barrett-Jackson Auction Company is appreciated by the JDRF family and all those living with type 1 diabetes. The \$300,000 raised tonight will get us closer to a world without type 1 diabetes."

The 1956 Ford F-100, or "Snakebit," as the truck is known, is a blend of street rod styling with influences from the iconic Ford Shelby GT500.

It boasts a supercharged 5.4-liter V8 breathing through a high-performance exhaust system. A six-speed manual gearbox feeds the estimated 550 horsepower to the 20-inch rear wheels.

The sale was made possible through "Wheels of Dreams," which is a unique collaboration involving KISS bassist and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Gene Simmons and his wife and Saskatoon-born actress Shannon Tweed-Simmons, along with area businesses, including the local Saskatchewan Ford dealer association, said Ford spokesman Jayson Demchak.

Though the fundraising campaign to build the hospital started several years ago, the group collectively wanted to do their part to achieve the 2016 construction completion goal. The two celebrities joined the truck on stage for the charity sale.

"We are elated with the response to this one-of-a-kind truck," said Vaughn Wyant, co-chair of Wheels of Dreams and president and CEO of Vaughn Wyant Automotive Group.

AAM Names Bly Europe President

American Axle & Manufacturing announced Jan. 16 that Michael J. Bly has joined AAM as president – AAM Europe. In this role, Bly assumes the responsibilities of leading AAM's regional business, engineering and manufacturing activity at AAM's European Headquarters and Engineering Center located in Bad Homburg, Germany.

In a 27-year career at GM, Bly most recently served as vice president of GM's European Powertrain Engineering located in Russelsheim, Germany. Bly, 46, has previously held various positions and management roles with GM while leading a multitude of powertrain and vehicle programs around the world.

Asian Firms Will Bid for Failed Fisker Assets

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) – A Delaware bankruptcy judge on Jan. 17 set a Feb. 12 auction date for Fisker Automotive, with two rival groups sharing initial bidding status for the remaining assets of the failed electric-vehicle maker.

Approval of the proposed bid procedures by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Kevin Gross clears the way for an auction that will start with competing bids by Hybrid Technology, led by Hong Kong billionaire Richard Li, and Chinese auto parts conglomerate Wanxiang Group Corp.

It's unclear whether other parties will join the bidding. Under the timeline approved by Gross, qualified bids are due Feb. 7, and a court hearing on whether to approve the auction results will be held Feb. 14.


Hybrid has offered \$30 million in cash to go along with a credit bid of \$25 million in debt that it would cancel as Fisker's senior secured lender.

Wanxiang has offered \$35.7 million in cash and a 20 percent equity stake for creditors in a re-organized Fisker.

Wanxiang's bid also allows for the possibility of creditors recovering more money through lawsuits against Fisker, Hybrid and other parties.


"We have two good bidders," said William Baldiga, an attorney representing Fisker's committee of unsecured creditors.

Under the bid procedures, the committee and Fisker will work together to select the winning bidder. Hybrid had proposed that at least \$5.5 million of the cash portion of its bid would go to Fisker's unsecured creditors if they support its bid over Wanxiang's.



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