

# Ford Transit Connect Endorsed by Tall Clubs International

It's a tall order to make the Ford Transit Connect van comfortable to the "big" demographic, but Ford was up to the challenge.

The new Ford Transit Connect, said Ford product communications coordinator William Mattiace, is standing a little taller after being endorsed by Tall Clubs International as a vehicle that brings fit and comfort to the "vertically gifted."

The Transit Connect was recognized last week as part of Paramount Tall Club's annual Chicago weekend. Paramount Tall Club is a Chicago-based member of Tall Clubs International.

"People of a certain stature have to make special considerations for head and leg room when out buying a new car," said Brian Comeno, president of Tall Clubs International.

"Car shopping is very tough, and if you are concerned about fuel efficiency, smaller is sometimes the way to go.

"The Transit Connect provides both comfort and fuel efficiency, giving people who are vertically gifted important factors that go into purchasing a new vehicle," said Comeno.

The Transit Connect, which hit dealer showrooms last month in

the United States, comes in two new models – a panel-side cargo van and a wagon. When equipped with the 1.6-liter EcoBoost engine, the Transit Connect Wagon is rated at 29 mpg highway.

The Transit Connect Wagon offers the headroom and interior space that makes it about 16 inches longer and wider than the Ford Fiesta sedan.

The wagon and cargo van have 46.8 inches of headroom in the first row and 45.1 inches in the second row. The long wheelbase wagon has 41.3 inches in the third row.

For leg room, the Transit Connect has 41.5 inches in the first row and 37.6 inches in the second row. Aside from space, the Transit Connect Wagon has fold-flat second- and third-row seating, a 1,200-pound-plus payload and a rear liftgate.

The wagon also comes with the choice between two fuel-efficient four-cylinder engines – a 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine and an optional 1.6-liter EcoBoost.

Tall Clubs International was established in 1938 and has since grown to include more than 100 chapters worldwide, Comeno said.

To be a member, men must be

at least 6-foot-2 and women must be 5-foot-10 or taller.

Tall Clubs International, Comeno said, has previously endorsed California King-sized beds for providing adequate comfort to the vertically gifted, and its European branches have been active with clothing designers and retailers who make and sell garments that are

able to fit the "vertically gifted."

"People who are vertically gifted can't just go out and buy any vehicle they want," said Comeno, who added he is one of the shorter members of the club, standing at 6-foot-2.

"The Transit Connect is much more in tune with providing comfort, as well as fuel efficiency and of course, fun."



7-foot-4 Dave Rasmussen fits into the all-new Transit Connect Wagon.

# Supplier DENSO To Invest \$10M, Add More Jobs

Global automotive supplier DENSO is investing \$10 million and adding 176 new jobs to expand its North American headquarters in Southfield.

"We're on track with our North American investment commitment, and to date, of the 1,200 jobs we've committed to creating in the U.S., we've already added 1,100," said Terry Helgesen, senior vice president, Industry Relations, DENSO International America, Inc.

The investment, which includes the purchase of an existing 81,000-square-foot office building on its Southfield campus, will increase its research and development capabilities in the region. The expansion is part of the company's plan to invest nearly \$1 billion and create 2,000 jobs in North America over a four-year span, Helgesen said.

The company will add approximately 176 new jobs at DENSO International America (DIAM) in Southfield.

The investment will expand research and development of next generation technologies to improve fuel economy and safety, Helgesen said.

# 2013 'An Outstanding Year,' Says Ford CEO Alan Mulally

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

growth for all," said Alan Mulally, Ford president and CEO.

"We are well-positioned for another solid year in 2014, as we continue our plan to serve customers in all markets around the world with a full family of vehicles – small, medium and large; cars, utilities and trucks – with the very best quality, fuel efficiency, safety, smart design and value."

As a result of Ford's 2013 financial performance, the company will make record profit-sharing payments to approximately 47,000 eligible U.S. hourly employees on March 13, 2014, Mulally said.

As part of the UAW-Ford collective bargaining agreement, Ford North America pre-tax profits of \$8.8 billion will generate profit-sharing payments of approximately \$8,800 per eligible employee on a full year basis. Individual profit-sharing payments may be higher or lower based on employee compensated hours.

"The company had an outstanding year, earning a profit that was higher than last year's strong performance and one of our best years ever," said Bob Shanks, executive vice president and chief financial officer.

"Our results were driven by record profits in North America and Asia Pacific Africa, improved results in Europe and another solid year from Ford Credit."

The fourth quarter results were driven by a strong industry, a robust full-size pickup segment, Ford's strong product lineup, growth in U.S. market share, con-

tinued discipline in matching production to real demand and a lean cost structure – even as the company invested more in product and capacity for future growth, Shanks said.

Trucks were very important to Ford, said Mike Wall, director of automotive analysis for IHS Automotive. And the people at Ford know that.

"For 2014, the big thing for Ford will be the launch of the new F-Series of trucks," Wall said. "They've done well for the Fusion, the Escape and the Focus. Each car does very well in its particular category, but the F-Series sold something like 700,000 vehicles in 2013. With the new F-Series, which will be built with a lot of aluminum, it's vitally important that the launch goes off well."

The people at Ford know that, Wall said. While every new vehicle launch has some sort of trouble, he expects Ford to minimize any problems. And he doesn't doubt Ford's ability to overcome any public concerns that aluminum trucks might not be strong enough.

"If they could sell a V6 truck to the hardcore truck buyer, I have no doubt they will be able to overcome concerns about aluminum parts in the new F-Series trucks," Wall said. "Having said that, the big story for Ford will be the F-Series launch. If they get it right, it will be a very good year for Ford."

**"We're well-positioned for another solid year in 2014."**

**– Alan Mulally, Ford CEO**

North America achieved a pre-tax profit of \$1.7 billion in the fourth quarter, about \$200 million lower than last year's record profit, Cooney said. Higher cost, mainly warranty and structural, and lower net pricing were offset partially by favorable volume and mix. The higher warranty expense

of about \$300 million was associated primarily with the Escape 1.6-liter recall announced in the fourth quarter.

For the full year, wholesale volume and revenue both improved 11 percent compared with 2012, Cooney said. North America's operating margin was 9.9 percent, half of a percentage point lower than a year ago, while pre-tax profit was \$8.8 billion, up about \$400 million.

Ford expects North America to be strongly profitable in 2014, but at a lower level than in 2013, with an operating margin ranging from 8 percent to 9 percent, Cooney said.

This outlook reflects the impact of launching 16 new or significantly refreshed products. As a result, Ford expects production downtime for model change-overs to result in lower wholesale volume than in 2013.

For the new F-150, Ford is scheduling this year 11 weeks of production downtime, including the summer shutdown, at its Dearborn plant and two weeks, including the summer shutdown, at its Kansas City plant.



Alan Mulally

Ford expects net pricing in 2014 to be slightly unfavorable as it runs out the outgoing models and assumes a continuation of a more competitive pricing environment for small and medium cars and utilities due to the weaker yen, Cooney said.

Ford also expects higher manufacturing, engineering and spending-related costs to support the launches, as well as for products and capacity actions that will be launched in later periods. Finally, Ford will not benefit this year from dealer stock increases as it did in 2013.

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