

Chrysler Has High Hopes for the New 200

by Jim Stickford

Chrysler's upcoming June introduction of the 2015 200 is a big deal because it can lead to big profits, according to a well-known industry analyst.

"The 200 launch is important to both the Chrysler brand and to Chrysler as a company," said Mike Wall, director of Automotive Analysis for IHS Automotive.

"The Sebring is from a couple of generations of design ago. Sergio Marchionne was able to get some work done on what would become the new 200, but it was only a moderate redesign.

"The Emimem commercial helped and the 200 has been an OK seller. But the mid-size mar-

ket is very competitive and if Chrysler the brand and the company want to get the volume they want with the new 200, they have to launch it right."

And, Wall said, a good launch could mean good profits.

"They can't make all their money from pickup trucks and SUVs," Wall said.

"And if Chrysler is going to be a big car company with something to offer in all the market segments, then they have to have something like the 200.

"If it is successful, it can really add to the company's bottom line and they won't be sending otherwise loyal customers who want a mid-size car to the competition.

"A company like Chrysler, when it wants to leverage economies of scale in production, will want to be in as many segments as possible."

So, Wall said, he's not surprised that the company has been promoting the 200 as much as it has. It's a fully post-bankruptcy design of a vehicle entering a profitable, but competitive, market niche, he said, adding that the automaker needs to let the public know about the car.

In a recent press release, Chrysler said the 2015 Chrysler 200 is the industry's first mid-size sedan with a standard nine-speed automatic transmission, which enables expected highway fuel economy ratings



2015 Chrysler 200

of 35 miles per gallon.

Spokesperson Kathy Graham said the Chrysler 200 sedan's "innovative available all-wheel-drive system" is the first to deliver an automatic fully disconnecting rear axle, improving fuel economy by reducing parasitic

loss when all-wheel drive is not needed.

The 2015 200 also gives a choice of two world-class engines: the 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 engine with 295 horsepower and

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Ramdev Named GM Finance VP And Treasurer

General Motors has named Niharika Taskar Ramdev, 44, GM vice president, Finance and Treasurer, effective April 1.

Prior to this appointment, Ramdev was chief financial officer for GM's Global Purchasing and Supply Chain operation, a position she has held since August of 2011.

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Grace Lieblein

GM Awards 68 'Suppliers of the Year'

General Motors recognized 68 of its best global automotive suppliers during its 22nd annual Supplier of the Year awards ceremony in mid-March.

"Our suppliers play an important role in helping GM deliver compelling vehicles to our customers," said Grace Lieblein, GM vice president, Global Purchasing and Supply Chain.

"Supplier of the Year winners have outstanding track records for consistently meeting our business needs while also sup-

porting our cultural priorities."

Fewer than 1 percent of GM's suppliers around the world receive the Supplier of the Year award.

Winners are recognized for delivering "innovative technology, superior quality, timely crisis management and competitive, total-enterprise cost solutions," said Lieblein.

In addition to presenting its Supplier of the Year awards, GM also honored four suppliers with its Overdrive Award, recognizing

suppliers who have undertaken "extraordinary initiatives and driven exceptional results" for GM's business.

"The Overdrive Award is given to those world-class suppliers that have gone above and beyond," Lieblein said. "Each has met the demands of our business, while at the same time demonstrating values important to GM and our communities."

Blake Synnestvedt, director of

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Marilyn Anderson and Wade Mullins with final V6 small block engine

Romulus Engine Plant Heads into New Era

Romulus Engine Operations recently completed buildout of the Small Block engine program at the plant. The last of the old model of small block engines was built on March 7.

More than 17.4 million V6 and V8 small block engines were produced at the plant during the 26-year production run, said GM spokesperson Kevin Nadrowski.

Decommission and construction activities are now under way at the plant as it prepares for upcoming engine and transmission programs, Nadrowski said.

Plant officials are making plans for the previously announced all-new, fuel-efficient V6 engine pro-

gram. In addition, the plant recently announced an all-new 10-speed automatic transmission program.

"The accomplishment of having produced a total of 17.4 million of the world's best small block V6 and V8 engines represents a proud moment for the men and women of Romulus Engine Operations," said Clark Freeman, Romulus Engine plant manager.

"Their level of team engagement has become synonymous with outstanding quality and performance in building great powertrains for General Motors."

The 26-year small block journey began at Romulus in 1988,

when the plant began producing the 4.3L Gen 1e V6. Eight years later in 1996, the plant launched the Gen 3 V8 small block, followed by the Gen 4.

"The number of engines that have been shipped from our facility is truly phenomenal," said Bob Crumley, UAW Local 163 chairman.

"Our success story is due to the commitment of our membership as well as our leadership. As a result, we were awarded two new products that ensure a positive future for many years to come."

Production of the V8 engine

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Mustang Reaches New Heights – 86th Floor

As Jimmy Cagney once said, "I'm on top of the world."

That's not exactly where the 2015 Mustang will be when Ford celebrates the 50th anniversary of the car's introduction.

But, almost.

Ford will celebrate the event by placing the new Mustang on top of the Empire State Building.

The selected Mustang convertible actually will sit on the 86th floor observatory, allowing visitors to join in the festivities April 16-17.

Ford is re-creating the same feat it achieved nearly 50 years ago – displaying the Mustang at the world-famous attraction – once again making history, said Ford spokesperson Angie Kozleski.

Right now, a technical team is hard at work disassembling a Mustang into sections so that it will fit into the elevators of the 1,454-foot-tall international

landmark, Kozleski said.

"New York is one of the greatest cities in the world, and it's the place where the Ford Mustang story began 50 years ago," said Mark Fields, Ford chief operating officer.

"We're thrilled to be visiting the architectural landmark that has been the heart of the Manhattan skyline for 83 years with the newest generation of the car that is the soul of Ford Motor Company."

Taking a car 86 stories above the densely populated streets of Midtown Manhattan is no simple task, Kozleski said. No portable crane can reach the 86th floor observatory, and the spire towering above the relatively narrow deck makes helicopter delivery impossible.

That leaves the elevators as the only viable option.

When the Empire State Building opened in 1931 as the world's

then-tallest building – a title it held for nearly 40 years – no one would have envisioned trying to transport a car up in the original elevators, Kozleski said.

But in 1965, a prototype Mustang convertible was sliced into three main sections plus windshield so that the sections would fit into those elevators.

"Like all good craftsmen, our team is measuring twice and cutting once to make sure we can get this Mustang up in the elevators," said Dave Pericak, Mustang chief engineer.

"Like the team that did this in 1965, the current crew visited the Empire State Building before starting and took careful measurements of its new elevators and doors before cutting up the car."

The 2015 Mustang is nearly seven inches longer and four

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A Mustang sits atop the Empire State Building in this 50-year-old photo.

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31201 Chicago Road South
Warren, Michigan 48093
586-939-6800

Contact us:
Info@DetroitAutoScene.com

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Jim Stickford, news

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'Top Employer' Awarded Valeo For HR Strategy

Automotive supplier Valeo has been certified by the Top Employer Institute as a 2014 Top Employer in the United States.

Top Employer certification is awarded to organizations meeting the highest standards in human resources management based on criteria, such as benefits and working conditions, training and skills development, career development and culture management, said Valeo spokesperson Brad Warner.

Valeo United States joins Valeo's European and Asian operations as 2014 Top Employers.

The award was presented to Valeo North America president Françoise Colpron and Valeo United States Human Resources director Dennis Clark at a special ceremony March 20 at the company's North American headquarters in Troy.

"This certification recognizes our human resources management strategy, which supports our objective to be an Employer of Choice in North America," said Colpron. "We strive to provide our team members with a diverse, inclusive and well-balanced place to work."

Valeo's Human Resources policy is based on the group's culture, forged around operational excellence and a set of shared values: ethics, transparency, empowerment, professionalism, teamwork and well-being at work, said Warner.

"Valeo encourages creative thinking and risk-taking to improve our product and business solutions and processes," said Clark. "This approach allows us to continue to innovate and grow."

Warner said Valeo has more than doubled its United States employment between 2010 and 2013 and plans to hire more in this country this year.

Chrysler Has High Hopes for New 200

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262 lb.-ft. of torque, and the standard 2.4-liter MultiAir2 Tiger-shark I-4 engine with 184 horsepower and 173 lb.-ft. of torque, said Graham. The I-4, she said, features a state-of-the-art electronic shifting with rotary dial.

A design for the center console, made possible by full electronic gear shifting with rotary shift knob, is "beautiful as well as functional," Graham said. A unique pass-through storage feature that the driver and front-seat passenger can both access is enabled by the rotary-dial electronic shifting.

"This is a segment first," Graham said.

An opening at the rear of the pass-through area allows wires and cables from items stored in the pass-through area to route directly to the hidden power supply located in the covered center console.

The center console features sliding cup holders, allowing drivers and passengers to use

Fiat Dealer Paints a Pretty Picture in Austin, Texas, Studio

Fiat's return to the U.S. auto market after a long absence has given Chrysler a chance to create a new brand identity.

One of the prime examples of this change is Fiat of Austin (Texas), the sales leader since the Fiat brand was reintroduced to the U.S. market in 2011.

The studio – read that "dealership" – recently moved to bigger and better quarters about five miles north of its original location.

"We're the number one Fiat brand retailer of all time, and with this move we intend to keep that title," said Lisa Copeland, general manager of Fiat of Austin.

"We now can expand our sales and staff, and have brought service under one roof."

The new Fiat of Austin location will contain an art gallery showcasing four hand-painted vehicles, said Chrysler spokesman Ralph Kisiel.

Austin artist Sue Ellen Stavrand, who owns Art Driven – the gallery that's part of the dealership – purchased three Fiat 500s and a Fiat 500L, and commissioned local Austin artist Cindy Raschke to use the vehicles as her canvas.

**"Fiat of Austin
has done a great job
for our brand
and customers."**

**– J. Stoicevich
Fiat Brand N.A.**

These four unique vehicles were revealed for the first time during the March 20 grand opening celebration. Art Driven partners with the nation's best artists to custom-design and hand-paint automobiles, said Kisiel.

Since opening in February 2011, Fiat of Austin has sold 2,237 units. That's more units sold than any Fiat studio in the country, Kisiel said.

In addition, Fiat of Austin was the first Fiat studio to sell more than 100 Fiat 500s in a given month, a milestone that earned the studio a personal visit from Chrysler chairman and CEO Sergio Marchionne. Fiat of Austin sold 110 units in April 2012.

"Fiat of Austin has done a great job for our brand and our customers," said Jason Stoicevich, head of Fiat Brand North America. "The all-new state-of-the-art facility will allow them to bring their attention to detail and passion for the brand to even more customers and continue their success story in Texas."

In its new digs, Fiat of Austin now boasts 29,000 square feet, up from the restrictive 6,000 square feet at its previous location. Service and parts are now provided at the new location, and there is ample space for inventory. Fiat of Austin is a member of the Nyle Maxwell Family of Dealerships.

At its new location on U.S. 183, more than 165,000 vehicles a day pass by the new studio, a far cry from 650 at the original location. Fiat of Austin is hiring up to 30 additional sales and service staff at its new location, Kisiel said.

"We are expecting awareness of our studio and of the Fiat brand to increase at our new location," Copeland said. "The key is to maintain our unique, boutique customer experience in our new, 29,000-square-foot studio."

Copeland has set an ambitious goal of selling 1,200 units this year, up from 737 units in 2013, and 937 units sold in 2012, which was best in the nation.

Ricky Beggs, vice president and editorial director for *Black Book*, said Fiat is trying to improve the experience of buying a car.

"Fiat has to do something to stand out from the competition," Beggs said. "This is a real opportunity for Chrysler and Fiat to grow the business."

The studios, Beggs said, look to be designed to appeal to a specific kind of buyer. He is familiar with the dealer group that owns the studio and said it has great sales. This shows that the group is willing to adapt to get even better sales.

Jan Kelly owns and operates Kelly Enterprises in the state of Washington. She specializes in retail car sales training and consults with companies and dealerships on the retail auto business.

"When I looked at the studio concept, what came to my memory," Kelly said, "was something I



Fiat Studio in Austin, Texas

first witnessed in the mid-1980s. Galpin Ford, located in the greater Los Angeles area, put in a restaurant. That gave salespeople a place to eat that was nearby and potential customers had a place to go and get something to eat while considering their options."

Kelly said she knows of dealerships in Orange County, Calif., that have put in nail salons. Even though not everyone who used the salon bought a car at these dealerships, it improved foot traffic to the dealership and put the inventory before the eyes of people who might not have otherwise looked at it. That helped sales.

"They made these dealerships a destination, whether by putting in a restaurant or a nail salon," Kelly said. "What I see with the Fiat studios is Chrysler doing the same thing."

Kelly said it was no accident that Fiat's latest studio is in Austin, Texas. A check of other Fiat Studio locations showed that they are based in places like Burlingame, Berkeley, Concord, Fremont and San Jose, all in the Bay Area of California.

"What those places, and Austin, have in common," Kelly said, "is that they are in or very close to university towns. They are going for a specific demographic, a tech-oriented demographic. It's a strategy aimed at the highly-educated. They want to make these studios a destination place."

And, Kelly said, it could work. She recalls working at a particular dealership many years ago. During election days, they would actually turn the showroom into a polling place.

That meant moving the cars out, and because of strict election rules that prohibited advertising, the staff left the voters alone. But that didn't mean the voters weren't influenced to buy a car from the dealership.

"In getting to the polling place, the voters still had to pass a lot of our cars," Kelly said. "They saw the inventory and they got used to thinking of our dealership as a destination of theirs."

"We'd often get customers who said they saw the vehicle they were going to buy while on their way to vote."

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Chrysler 200 center console

the space in a way that best fits their needs, said Graham.

The 200 will be built at the SHAP facility and will use World Class Manufacturing principles and a new, updated assembly plant.

This attention to detail is required, Wall said, because there are a lot of good cars in the mid-size segment. "Being good enough is no longer good enough," he said.



Dan Deeds, manufacturing engineering director, left, and GM Warren Transmission Plant Manager Mike Dulaney, third from right, with Ohio State University engineering students.

Students Job-Shadow GM Engineers

There's nothing like hands-on learning.

That's what some students discovered recently when GM's Warren Transmission plant held two job-shadowing events for college and high school students with engineering aspirations.

After Ohio State University students visited the plant, GM executives partnered with three local Warren-area high schools to give their students the tour.

Both activities allowed students to be paired with plant engineers for a day-long experience on the manufacturing floor.

These events are the result of ongoing partnerships the plant has with universities and Macomb Science Olympiad, which focuses on increasing students' interest in the fields of science and engineering, as well as developing their problem-solving and teamwork skills.

Both plant visits focused on providing students a realistic experience of a plant engineer, said GM spokesman Kevin Nadrowski. Plant activities included setting a network communications hub, understanding a broach tooling change, and troubleshooting why the assembly line was down.

The General Motors University Engineering Job Shadow Program is in its eighth year of part-

nering with colleges. Students have the opportunity to spend time at a prospective employer's site, observe engineers, and learn about professional roles in the automotive industry.

Feedback from the visiting OSU Manufacturing Engineering students was very positive, Nadrowski said.

"Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you during the GM Transmission Plant Job Shadow event," said student Rich Ekenrode. "I was very excited to learn more about the day-to-day responsibilities for engineers at General Motors."

Student Luke Moore's comment: "I want to say thank you to everyone at GM for letting me experience a day in the life of an engineer at General Motors. It was very helpful to me in making decisions for my future."

"I have a better understanding of an engineer's role in manufacturing. Manufacturing appears to be an exciting place to build a career."

The high school program offered a very similar experience, Nadrowski said.

Local Warren-area high schools identify students that are considering engineering as a field of study in college, so these students are also paired up with plant engineers and

spent the day job-shadowing their activities throughout the facility.

Feedback from the high school students was also very strong, Nadrowski said.

"There were many interesting things I saw," said Andrew Rouditchenko, a student at Warren Mott High School.

"The assembly line process and all of the detailed machines and robots on the assembly lines fascinated me."

"It was pretty amazing how hefty transmission cases could be built with such efficiency and precision, and it's hard to believe that 50 years ago most of this technology didn't exist."

Ramdev Named VP at GM

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"Niharika is an accomplished leader who brings substantial treasury and operational experience to this role," said Chuck Stevens, GM executive vice president and chief financial officer.

"Her primary focus will be on maintaining our fortress balance sheet, achieving investment grade credit ratings and developing a sustainable capital allocation strategy."

She will replace Jim Davlin, who has elected to leave the company to pursue outside opportunities. Davlin will remain an advisor to the company for six months beginning May 1.

"Since Jim joined GM in 2011, we made significant progress creating a fortress balance sheet, and we thank him for his contributions to this success," Stevens said.

After joining GM in 1996,



Niharika Taskar Ramdev

Ramdev held a variety of leadership roles, including assistant treasurer from 2008 to 2011 and regional treasurer for GM International Operations from 2006 to 2008.

GM Awards 68 'Suppliers of the Year'

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commercial business for L&L Products in Bruce, Mich., said he heard about winning one of GM's awards at the actual ceremony.

"It was a fabulous event," Synnestvedt said. "We have a great relationship with GM's engineering and purchasing department. That's quite remarkable because often with OEMs, those two departments don't always form a tight team."

L&L Products, Synnestvedt said, makes sealing components

such as baffles to reduce noise. They also make structural parts to improve crashworthiness and durability.

The company, Synnestvedt said, worked up a new business proposal that allowed the company to be able to influence design while still being able to take cost out.

"You only get invited to an event like this if you're going win an award," Synnestvedt said. "We've won two in the past and we've been working with GM since the Fisher Body days."

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Introducing the First Ladies of Mustang

When people think Mustang, what often comes to mind are qualities like sportiness and “masculine cool” – right?

So it may be a surprise to learn some key players in bringing Mustang to life over the past 50 years have been women.

Ford marked International Women’s Day March 8 and National Women’s History Month this month with a look at some of the women who have played an important role in creating the new Ford Mustang, as well as women who have influenced the pony car over the past 50 years.

Throughout the course of this car’s life, women have made contributions to the Mustang story in many ways, said Mustang spokesperson Alan Hall.

In fact, the first person to buy a Mustang was a woman.

In 1964, a Chicago school-teacher, Gail Brown, made history when she became the first Mustang owner in America. She still owns the car, and what makes her story all the more special is that Brown bought her Mustang on April 15 – two days before the car was set to go on sale. The Chicago dealer had displayed the car two days earlier than scheduled.

These days, Hall said, women hold key positions at Ford in the development of the new Mustang, in roles ranging from engineering the customer drive experience, to picking the car’s colors and materials, to continuing the Mustang legacy of being a household name.

One of these women is Marcy Fisher, Hall said. As vehicle line director for the program, Fisher oversees every detail of the new Ford Mustang as it comes together – from the planning process to when the car hits dealer showrooms.

Fisher was excited to have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help develop and launch the all-new pony car in its 50th year, Hall said. In addition to her Mustang responsibilities, Fisher serves as vehicle line director for Ford Explorer, Taurus, Police Interceptor, Flex and Escape development.

She has 28 years of engineering expertise in manufacturing and product development, having joined Ford in 1986 as an engineer. Since then, Fisher has held a number of positions with the company, including several engineering jobs at assembly plants where the vehicles come together on the line. She has also served as director of design engineering in Product Development.

Hall said Fisher has twice been named to the 100 Leading Women in the Automotive Industry list by *Automotive News*.

Michele Lubin Henney, vehicle integration supervisor, has also played a role in developing the new Mustang, Hall said.

When customers sit in the new Mustang this fall, they will get a “world-class” driving experience thanks in part to Henney’s tireless efforts, said Hall.

A lifelong motorsports enthusiast, Henney’s passion was sparked in her grandfather’s auto body shop and during weekends spent at the track watching her father race motocross. Today, she has her own collection of motorcycles, and loves to hit the road with her husband.

Henney is responsible for the integration of vehicle attributes – how the car sounds, how it feels when it drives, fuel economy, and driver and passenger comfort, to name just a few, Hall said. “Mustang attracts a variety of customers, all of whom are looking for the ultimate Mustang driving experience,” said Henney.

“As a female engineer on the program, I can offer a different perspective than the men on the team. I believe the end result is the most refined total driving ex-



From left: Susan Lampinen, Melanie Banker, Michele Lubin Henney and Marcy Fisher surround the new 2015 Mustang.

perience we’ve ever offered our customers. I can’t wait to see their reactions when they drive the new Mustang for the first time. I’m so proud to be a part of this team.”

Then there’s Susan Lampinen. For the past decade, Ford chief color and materials designer Lampinen has guided the process of selecting those often iconic exterior paint colors, along with colors and materials for the Mustang cabin.

“Mustang paint colors need to denote performance, sportiness and power,” says Lampinen. “I’m looking at authentic, expressive materials that need to be more premium, with a relentless attention to detail. With Mustang, I’m not afraid to take a risk.”

Melanie Banker is the U.S. marketing manager for the Mustang, Hall said. This job has Banker playing a critical role – first in bringing the car to customers in the marketplace – then in monitoring its performance.

A member of the Mustang team for several years, Banker works in both research and development of the new car, as well as in the consumer marketing process, Hall said.

“Men and women use their cars and the features of their vehicles differently, so having both involved in research and development is extremely important,” Banker said.

“Everyone loves Mustang, so it is important for us to keep all customer groups in mind when making vehicle decisions.

“I hear from customers every day sharing the things they love about the car, and people send me pictures of themselves with their Mustangs,” says Banker.

“I get requests from 7-year-olds asking me why we make certain vehicle decisions. The dedica-

tion of the team as a whole is amazing, because everyone here knows how much Mustang means to its fans and to Ford.

“Working on the product side has given me a whole new appreciation for how a company works to put a vehicle together. This has been exceptionally rewarding, and I’m very excited for what’s to come.”

Fiat Ad Man Will Share Stories on Launch Success

“The FIAT Brand Storyscape” is the title of an April 16 seminar presentation by Casey Hurbis, the head of Fiat Brand Communication and Advertising.

Hurbis will talk Fiat and share the importance of creating a story to connect customers to a brand at the Marketing & Sales Executive of Detroit (MSED) seminar.

The presentation will provide information on the successful launch of the Fiat Brand and the role social media played in bringing the brand to life, said MSED meetings coordinator Cheryl Dry.

Hurbis has been responsible for re-establishing the FIAT Brand in America, Dry said. Some of his projects include the Super Bowl commercial featuring supermodel Catrinel Menghia, Charlie Sheen’s “House Arrest” commercial, and most recently the “Mirage” campaign featuring P. Diddy and the hit song, “Happy,” by Pharrell Williams.

The event will be held at Golling Fiat at 34500 Woodward Avenue in Birmingham. Cost for the event is \$20 for MSED members and \$60 for non-members.

AP Writer Likes Cadillac’s Electric ELR as ‘Sleek, Sexy’

by ANN M. JOB
For The Associated Press

Finally, there’s an electric car that rivals Tesla’s eye-catching Model S.

The sleek, new-for-2014 Cadillac ELR coupe is arguably as sexy looking as the sporty Model S, and like the Tesla, it’s a plug-in vehicle that’s capable of traveling for hours without stopping.

For drivers who don’t want to worry about finding a place to recharge batteries and waiting around until the charging is complete, the Cadillac ELR is eminently more accommodating.

It carries with it a four-cylinder gasoline engine. So when the electric power is depleted, the ELR switches seamlessly to the on-board engine and can, therefore, travel well over 300 miles.

A few points, though: According to U.S. government estimates, the Cadillac’s range in all-electric mode is just 37 miles, while the Tesla’s all-electric mode is good for up to 265 miles.

Secondly, the Tesla only has an electric powerplant and so is viewed as more of an earth-friendly car by environmental purists. Plus, while the ELR is a new model at Cadillac, it’s frequently called the Cadillac version of the Chevrolet Volt because it uses the Volt’s underlying front-wheel-drive platform and electric-gasoline power system. But the luxury car price tag on the ELR means buyers can purchase two Volts for the price of one ELR.

Starting MSRP, including destination charge, is \$80,990 for a 2014 ELR. The 2014 Volt has a starting MSRP, including destination charge, of \$35,805.

Meantime, the rear-wheel drive, 2014 Tesla S has a starting retail price, including destination charge, of \$63,570 with an electric storage battery pack that provides a federal government estimated travel range of 208 miles. A 2014 Tesla S with a higher capacity battery pack that provides a federal government estimated travel range of 265 miles has a starting retail price of \$73,570.

All ELRs come with a continuously variable automatic transmission that a driver operates like an automatic.

Standard equipment includes dual-zone, automatic climate control, remote keyless entry and keyless start, suede microfiber ceiling material, rearview camera, outside heated mirrors, 20-inch wheels, rain-sensing wipers and premium Bose 10-speaker audio system.

The ELR also includes Cadillac’s CUE touch screen for ventilation and audio controls, among other things, and Bluetooth hands-free phone connectivity and audio streaming as standard equipment.

The ELR even allows drivers to program the times when they want the car to begin charging, say, late at night when the electricity rates can be lower-priced.

But the ELR, which has the highest starting retail price of any Cadillac car, does not offer a sunroof. Fortunately, the ELR drives like a regular car. Though it weighs 4,050 pounds – the battery pack alone weighs 435 pounds – the ELR moves quickly from startup under electric propulsion. Production of the ELR is limited to fewer than 5,000 annually.

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Vincentric Calls Silverado ‘Best Value’

The Chevy Silverado 2500HD has been named a Best Value in America by the data analysis firm Vincentric.

The firm also called Chevrolet the Best Value Truck Brand in America.

Vincentric officials said the Silverado family represents the lowest cost to own of any full-size pickups.

Vincentric analyzes a vehicle's cost-of-ownership through eight different measures: depreciation, fees and taxes, financing, fuel, insurance, maintenance, opportunity cost, and repairs, said Chevy truck spokesperson Tom Wilkinson.

Vincentric awards the Best Value in America Award using an analysis comparing ownership costs to a vehicle's market price.

"With the average age of trucks on the road now more than 11 years, we know that customers hold on to their trucks for a long time," said John Fitzpatrick, Silverado Marketing manager.

"With the lowest cost of ownership of any full-size truck in the segment, the Silverado makes it easiest on our customers to do so."

David Wurster, president of Vincentric, said his group's statistical analysis used more than 1,000 pickup truck configurations to identify the best value truck line in the United States.

"We found that Chevrolet trucks cost less to own and operate than would be expected, providing great value to truck buyers," Wurster said.

"Chevrolet and the Silverado have a long history of providing high-value trucks, and the 2014 offerings continue this heritage."

Wilkinson said that cost-to-own matters to truck buyers more than buyers of just about any other vehicle segment.

"What you have to remember," Wilkinson said, "is that many of our



2014 Chevrolet Silverado 2500 HD

pickup truck buyers are fleet operators and small business owners. They have to consider everything, especially cost-to-own, when they are looking to buy a truck.

"The only vehicle segment I can think of where cost is considered as much by buyers is the full-size van niche, and that's almost totally a commercial market."

Wilkinson said that even with non-commercial buyers, cost-to-own is one of the major factors customers takes a good hard look at when considering purchasing a particular brand of pickup truck. Other factors considered, Wilkinson said, include durability and reliability and experience with the brand.

"If you're a fleet buyer who is going to keep a truck on the road for 10 or 11 years, cost-of-operation becomes very important," Wilkinson said.

"The truck might be completely paid for after six or seven years. After that, a fleet manager has to look at cost-to-own for the remaining three or four years that the truck will be in the company's fleet."

Got News?

If you have solid business news for this paper, please contact us at News@DetroitAutoScene.com.

Simply put, Wilkinson said, cost-to-own plays a big part in the decision-making process for truck buyers.

And this ranking of the Silverado by an outside group like Vincentric helps make the pickup stand out and become more attractive to buyers.

Ally Financial To Issue Stock

NEW YORK (AP) – Ally Financial has filed for an initial public offering that could raise as much as \$3.06 billion.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury says it plans to sell 95 million shares for between \$25 and \$28 each, which would raise between \$2.38 billion and \$2.66 billion. Treasury also granted the offering's underwriters – Citigroup, Goldman, Sachs & Co., Morgan Stanley and Barclays – a 30-day option to buy up to an additional 14.3 million shares to cover possible over-allotments, raising up to an additional \$399 million.

Ally, formerly known as GMAC received \$17.2 billion in government support during the financial crisis. But the government has since recouped the bulk of its investment.

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Barra Goes Online to Talk With Customers on Recall

Barra is preparing to testify before Congress on the recall. A Senate subcommittee announced last week that Barra will appear at a hearing on April 2. She is also speaking to a House subcommittee on April 1.

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Stingray Owners Can Learn From Racing Legend Fellows

Chevrolet wants to take some owners to school to help them get the most from their new 2014 Corvette Stingrays.

A two-day program is available to 2014 Corvette Stingray owners at the Ron Fellows Performance Driving School. Chevrolet is discounting the cost from \$2,500 to \$1,000 – a \$1,500 reduction from the standard rate.

Developed and managed by Corvette racer Ron Fellows, the performance-driving curriculum at Spring Mountain Motor Resort and Country Club in Pahrump, Nev., accommodates drivers of all skill levels, said Chevy spokesperson Monte Doran.

“We designed the Corvette Stingray to make its owners better drivers through technologies such as the Driver Mode Selector, Active Rev Match, electronic limited-slip differential and more,” said Tim Mahoney, chief marketing officer, global Chevrolet.

“Through the Ron Fellows Performance Driving School, (Stingray owners will) learn to make the most of its technologies and delve deeper into the Corvette’s capabilities, resulting in a more exciting and fulfilling driving experience.”

The discount from Chevrolet is good for one year from the retail purchase of a new Corvette Stingray and applies only to the original owner, Doran said. Only one attendee per vehicle is eligible for the discount. Attendees are responsible for the cost of travel and accommodations.

Owners do not have to bring their personal Stingray to Pahrump, Doran said. The school uses a fleet of Corvette Stingrays for instruction.

“We are proud to be the official high-performance driving school for Chevrolet and the Corvette Stingray,” said Fellows. “Our goal is to ensure every driver leaves with enhanced driving skills, more confidence on the street and track and, most of all, a deeper understanding of his or her Corvette’s capabilities and how to safely enjoy the car to the fullest.”

Along with class instruction, participants will spend extensive

time driving the Stingray on Spring Mountain’s world-class 2.2-mile road course where three levels of instruction cover novice track drivers to those with more experience, Doran said.

“It’s more than simply going fast and learning when to turn and apply the throttle,” said Fellows.

“Mind speed and decision-making are key elements in the high-performance world, and our car control exercises and on-track training will help drivers improve their ability to process information quickly and accurately, resulting in a better coordination of eyes, hands and feet to improve their driving skill.

“It’s great fun – and drivers will definitely challenge their limits



Stingray owners at the Ron Fellows Performance Driving School in Pahrump, Nev.

to find the limits of the new Stingray.”

Fellows is recognized as one of North America’s most versatile and successful road-racing driv-

ers, Doran said. A charter member of Corvette Racing, Fellows was part of historic Corvette Racing victories at the Rolex 24 at Daytona, the 24 Hours of Le

Mans and 12 Hours of Sebring.

In 2011, Fellows was inducted into the Corvette Hall of Fame, located at the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Ky.

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Nissan Recalling 1M Vehicles for Air Bags – Again

DETROIT (AP) – Nissan is recalling just over 1 million cars, SUVs and vans because the front passenger air bags may not inflate in a crash.

It’s the company’s second recall to fix the same problem.

The recall affects the Altima midsize car, Leaf electric car, Pathfinder SUV and Sentra compact models from the 2013 and 2014 model years, as well as the NV200 Taxi van and Infiniti JX35 SUV from 2013. Also covered are the Infiniti QX60 and Q50 SUVs from 2014.

In documents filed with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Nissan said the vehicles’ computer software may not detect an adult in the passenger seat. If that happens, the air bags won’t inflate.

Nissan will notify owners and dealers will update the software for free.

The recall is expected to start in mid-April.

Most of the vehicles were recalled in February of last year for a similar problem. Dealers replaced seat sensors, but Nissan said it continued to get consumer complaints and warranty claims in vehicles that had been repaired.

Nissan received three reports of air bags failing to inflate in a crash.

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