

Buick's Concept Car Avenir Wins EyesOn Design Award

Buick's concept car – the Avenir – won the EyesOn Design award for Best Overall Concept at the 2015 North American International Auto Show.

The Buick Avenir's sculpted exterior and dramatic proportions aren't the only attributes that helped win the award, said GM spokeswoman Lauren Indiveri.

The design and materials within the concept car's interior continue to earn accolades, she said.

"The attention to detail within Avenir is outstanding," said Charles Allen, a retired automotive designer who served as a chief judge for the 2015 EyesOn Design Awards.

"What stands out to me is how well everything is integrated – all of the materials and elements work together seamlessly to provide a sensation of understated elegance that fits the Buick brand perfectly."

While designers drew inspiration from nature – specifically water washing upon a shoreline – when shaping the lines within

Avenir's interior, the color and trim team worked to find the right materials to add a dynamic flair, said Indiveri.

"With Avenir's interior, we really wanted to select materials that would complement the surfaces within," said Rebecca Waldmeir, Buick Color and Trim design manager.

"Using a distinctive combination of premium leather, suede, wood, chrome and acrylic, we were able to design elements that flow seamlessly throughout the interior."

Avenir's designers even put a new twist on wood trim, a traditional Buick element. Not only are wood accents featured on the door panels, but the wood itself provides a more luxurious and natural appearance that adds to the airiness of the interior, Indiveri said.

"We've used open-pore wood in a modern way, much like what you'll find in high-end furniture. It's an oiled, low-gloss execution



GM award-winning designers, from left, Sharon Gauci, Jenny Morgan-Douralis and Rebecca Waldmeir

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GM Earns \$2.8 Billion Profit in 2014; UAW Bonus \$9,000

DETROIT (AP) – If it weren't for the recalls, 2014 would have been a stellar year for General Motors.

Even with \$2.8 billion in pretax costs to fix more than 30 million recalled vehicles and \$400 million set aside for death and injury claims, GM still managed to turn a \$2.8 billion profit.

That's because, otherwise, most of the stars lined up well for the Detroit automaker. Gas prices dropped more than a buck to \$2.26 per gallon. The U.S. economy gained steam. Cheap credit was abundant.

Combined, they sent buyers to GM's newly redesigned and lucrative pickup trucks and large SUVs in North America, the company's most profitable market. At the same time, chief competitor Ford's truck plants were down much of the year while it

switched to a new pickup with an aluminum body.

Sales in China grew faster than the market. Worldwide sales were up 2 percent to 9.9 million vehicles, a record.

Things were so good, GM decided to increase its dividend

next quarter by 20 percent, to 36 cents, pending board approval.

Yes, there was trouble in Europe, Russia and Latin America, but by and large, GM had a good year.

The company's full-year earnings amounted to \$1.65 per

share. Net income was down 26 percent from \$3.8 billion in 2013.

But excluding one-time items, GM made \$3.05, beating Wall Street's expectation of \$2.64, according to FactSet.

Revenue rose slightly to \$155.9 billion, beating the analysts'

prediction of \$150.6 billion.

"We're really going to carry the positive momentum into 2015," Chief Financial Officer Chuck Stevens said. "We expect both aggregate earnings and profit mar-

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GM Up 18% from Last Year

The first month of 2015 was a good one for GM, said company spokesman Jim Cain.

General Motors dealers in the United States delivered 202,786 vehicles last month for the company's best January sales in seven years, Cain said.

Total sales were up 18 percent compared with a year ago. Retail sales were up 14 percent and fleet deliveries were up 32 percent.

"Consumers feel very good because more people are working, the U.S. economy is expanding and fuel prices are low," said Kurt McNeil, U.S. vice president of Sales Operations.

"Consumer and commercial demand for trucks and crossovers is really driving our business, and our move into the small crossover segment with



2015 Chevy Cruze

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Fiat Chrysler Best Since 2007

Fiat Chrysler reported U.S. sales of 145,007 units, a 14 percent increase compared with sales in January 2014 (127,183 units), and the group's best January sales since 2007.

The Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Ram Truck and Fiat brands each posted year-over-year sales gains in January compared with the same month a year ago, said

Fiat Chrysler spokesman Ralph Kisiel.

The Jeep brand's 23 percent increase was the largest sales gain of any Fiat Chrysler brand and its best January sales ever.

The group extended its streak of year-over-year sales gains to 58 consecutive months.

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2015 Dodge Dart



2015 F-150

F-150 'Hottest' Ford Product

Ford Motor Company posted a 15 percent sales increase in the U.S. in January, with sales of 178,351 vehicles. Retail sales of 128,666 vehicles marked a 13 percent increase, providing the best retail January results since 2004.

Retail passenger car sales were up 6 percent, utilities saw a 10 percent increase, and trucks gained 23 percent.

"Customer demand is strong

for our newest vehicles, driving retail sales gains across our lineup in January," said Erich Merkle, Ford's U.S. sales analyst.

"Momentum is especially strong for our F-Series pickup, with the new F-150 the hottest product on our dealer lots in January."

F-Series, America's best-selling truck for the 38th straight year,

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Buick Enclave Sales Continue Steady Growth

Buick Enclave's 62,300 sales in the United States in 2014 represented the second consecutive year of record sales for Buick's flagship crossover and built on momentum that has barely paused since its launch in mid-2007.

While most vehicles follow somewhat of a bell curve for sales during their lifecycle, the Enclave has continued on an upward trajectory after more than seven years.

Minor dips in 2009 and 2012 reflected overall trends in the recovering auto industry, but record-setting 2014 sales represented a 39 percent increase over the Enclave's first full year of production.

Buick spokeswoman Lauren

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Contact us:
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Deadline: Thursday 5:00 p.m.
for the next edition of Monday

William Springer II, publisher
Lisa A. Torretta, operations
Jim Stickford, news

Tech Center News is a trademark
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www.TechCenterNews.com

Fiat Chrysler Profits Down; UAW Bonus Up to \$2,750

DETROIT (AP) – Fiat Chrysler Automobiles U.S., formerly Chrysler Group, saw its net profit fall 56 percent last year, even though global sales and revenue both rose 15 percent.

The Auburn Hills company blamed the profit drop on a \$1.2 billion one-time cost linked to retiring a note held by a United Auto Workers union healthcare trust fund for retirees.

The company, now part of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles N.V., made \$2.8 billion in 2013. But that was aided by a \$962 million gain on tax assets.

Fiat Chrysler's U.S. unit still reports earnings separately from its parent company based in the Netherlands, even though the companies were merged into one last year.

The company also announced that its 35,700 union workers in the U.S. would get \$2,750 profit-sharing checks based on last year's modified operating profit of \$3.5 billion. The payments are up from \$2,500 in 2013.

Fiat Chrysler also paid a \$1.3 billion "special distribution payment" to its parent company as required by credit agreements.

Chrysler's worldwide sales of 2.8 million were 15 percent higher than in 2013 as it gained a full percentage point of U.S. market share to 12.4 percent.

Sales outside North America rose 17 percent to 363,000 vehicles as Jeep SUV and Ram pickup truck sales soared.

For the fourth quarter, Chrysler's profit fell 59 percent to \$669 million on revenue of \$22.95 billion.

Handbell Group To Visit Library

The Warren Public Library is hosting the Detroit Handbell Ensemble at the Warren Civic Center on Sunday, March 1, at 3:30 p.m.

Librarian Kathy Faba said the group was established in 1991 and acts "as an ambassador for the art of ringing and performing with music, and included members who are musicians, educators and business professionals from across Michigan."

Faba said the group is directed by Dr. Michael Burkhardt. She also said that space is limited so those wishing to attend the performance should call 586-574-4564 to reserve a spot.

GM Earns \$2.8 Billion Profit in 2014; UAW Bonus \$9,000

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gins to improve in all of our automotive regions."

Stevens said the company's core earnings performance for the year was strong when recall costs are excluded. The company earned \$6.5 billion before interest and taxes last year, and that would have been more than \$9 billion without the recalls, he said. Recalls, he said, cost the company about \$1.10 per share.

In North America, GM's most profitable region, the company made \$6.6 billion before taxes, 11 percent below 2013. That will bring record profit-sharing checks of about \$9,000 for each of the company's 48,400 eligible

union factory workers later this month. To reward employees, GM backed out recall costs and measured the profit-sharing based on core earnings.

Stevens said the company is on its way to achieving a 10 percent North American profit margin next year. Last year, the margin, which is the percentage of revenue a company gets to keep, was 6.5 percent. But without recalls, it was 8.9 percent, an improvement over 7.8 percent in 2013.

The company's pretax loss in Europe widened almost 60 percent for the year to \$1.37 billion, mainly due to economic problems in Russia. International operations including Asia fell 3

percent for the year to \$1.2 billion.

South America reported a full-year loss of \$180 million, compared with a \$327 million profit in 2013. Stevens said the company is still predicting a pretax profit in Europe in 2016.

In the fourth quarter, GM reported net profit of \$1.1 billion, or 66 cents per share. That's 21 percent better than a year ago. Excluding \$300 million of negative one-time items, GM made \$1.19, beating analysts' estimates of 83 cents per share.

The same factors that helped GM overcome the year of the recall remain present today, so the company needs to perform this year, Morgan Stanley analyst

Adam Jonas wrote in a note to investors. "We may be looking at as close to an alignment of forces in GM's favor as we're going to see this decade," he wrote.

Still, there are uncertainties. Recall costs could mount as claims from those killed or injured in crashes caused by defective ignition switches grow. Sales in Europe and Russia could falter, and Japanese competitors will roll out attractive new products.

And cheap leases and financing for six years or longer have likely pulled sales ahead from future months, according to Jonas. The pre-bankruptcy GM would often beat analysts' forecasts during times when credit was easy, he wrote.

Ford UAW Employees to Collect \$6,900 in Profit-Sharing

One of the nuggets of information dropped in Ford's financial statement released in January was that the profit-sharing bonus for eligible Ford workers for 2014 will be about \$6,900.

Included in the company's financial press release was the statement, "as a result of Ford's 2014 financial performance, the company will make profit-sharing payments to approximately 50,000 eligible U.S. hourly employees on March 12, 2015."

"As part of the UAW-Ford collective bargaining agreement, Ford North America pre-tax profits of \$6.9 billion will generate profit-sharing payments of approximately \$6,900 per eligible employee on a full-year basis."

"Individual profit-sharing payments may be higher or lower based on employee-compensated hours."

Ford spokeswoman Whitney Eichinger said that figure was down from 2013, when eligible workers received up to \$8,800.

"The amount of the profit-sharing bonus is based on a formula," Eichinger said. "The check is a reflection of our performance in North America and our employees are able to benefit from that."

Ford CEO Mark Fields said in the financial statement that "2014 was a solid yet challenging year for Ford – with our investments and a record number of new products launched around the world positioning us for strong growth this year and beyond."

"The entire Ford team remains focused on our three priorities of accelerating our One Ford plan, delivering product excellence and driving innovation in every part of the business."

Eichinger said that one of the main factors affecting 2014 profits was the introduction of the new aluminum body 2015 F-150 pickup trucks.

The company ramped down sales of the vehicle, which is its best seller, in the last quarter of

2014. It shut down production of the 2014 model in Dearborn so that it could be retooled to build the 2015 F-150. Production of the vehicle didn't begin until the last week in November, and the first models didn't hit dealer-

ships until mid-December.

Eichinger said that early sales of the 2015 F-150 are very healthy, and as production of the vehicle ramps up in Dearborn and Kansas City, greater profits to the company should follow.

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Avenir's winning interior

GM's Death Compensation Grants 'Likely to Rise,' Says Feinberg Aide

DETROIT (AP) – More than 1,100 claims were filed in the week before the deadline to seek payments from the General Motors ignition switch compensation fund. So far, 51 death and 77 injury claims have been granted.

But the fund's deputy administrator says the grants are very likely to rise as she and her boss, compensation expert Kenneth Feinberg, sort through at least 4,180 claims that came before the deadline passed.

The last-minute flurry of activity is common in compensation cases, said Deputy Administrator Camille Biros, who has worked with Feinberg on funds for the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the BP oil spill.

Although most of the claims were filed electronically, some will "trickle in" in the coming days because they were postmarked by the Jan. 31 deadline, she said.

"I can say that there will likely be more" death and injury claims granted, Biros said. "Until we sort through and review the newly submitted documents, we can't make that estimation."

GM was aware of faulty ignition switches on Chevrolet Cobalts and other small cars for more than a decade, but it didn't recall them until 2014. On 2.6 million of them worldwide, the switches can slip out of the "on" position, causing the cars to stall, knocking out power steering and turning off the air bags.

As of last week, the fund had rejected 386 claims, most because the cars involved were not models covered by the fund or because the air bags inflated in the crashes. If the air bags deployed, that means the cars had power and the ignition switches were working and not at fault, Feinberg has said.

It likely will take until late spring for Biros and Feinberg to sort through all of the claims, she said.

There is no deadline for them to make decisions on the claims, but people who filed will be given several chances to correct deficiencies in their claims, Biros said.

Last year, the company set aside \$400 million to make payments, but conceded that figure could grow to as much as \$600 million.

The company's chief financial officer told analysts earlier this month that those numbers have not changed so far. Compensation for deaths starts at \$1 million.

The GM ignition switch debacle, which brought congressional and Justice Department investigations and the maximum \$35

million fine from the government's auto safety agency, touched off a companywide safety review.

That brought a total of 84 recalls involving more than 30 million vehicles.

As of the end of January, GM had fixed just over 56 percent of the 2.19 million cars with faulty ignition switches that are still on the road in the United States, according to documents filed with federal safety regulators.

The company said it could not reach about 80,000 of the car owners.

Still, even with letters, telephone calls and Facebook messages, GM hasn't been able to get all the owners to have their cars repaired about a year after the recalls started.

It's not unusual for some automobile owners to ignore recall notices.

The average completion rate 1-1/2 years after a recall begins is 75 percent, according to the federal government's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Avenir Wins EyesOn Design Concept Award

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that contrasts beautifully with other interior décor," said Waldmeir.

Avenir's sculptural instrument panel incorporates an acrylate panel, carved to replicate three-dimensional wave-like patterns but layered beneath a smooth, high-gloss outer layer.

"As you look at the transparent surface from different angles, you will notice that it has a lot of visual depth and movement. It's a motif we carried to other areas of Avenir, including the seat design, and to the head- and tail-lamps," Waldmeir said.

While Avenir's exterior color is a cooler tone, designers wanted to provide a warm, inviting sensation within, Indiveri said. The lighter "Lyric" hue, found on most interior surfaces, helps achieve that feeling, while restrained use of a darker tone – "Coastal Myst" – on

the instrument panel and armrests provides a natural transition to the exterior. To further create a tailored feel, most surfaces within the Avenir are wrapped in leather or suede and accentuated with stitching.

All in all, Waldmeir said, Avenir's interior materials were designed to work in harmony and provide an upscale environment that feels natural and holistic to all passengers.

"The first thing you'll notice when you open Avenir's doors is just how clean and pure its interior design is," said Liz Wetzel, Buick interior design director.

"We've stripped it of superfluous, fussy details in order to rely on sculptural forms and harmonious surfaces. The result is a refreshing environment that provides a sense of well-being to anyone seated within."

Comprised of prominent mem-

bers of the automotive design community, the EyesOn Design jury also praised Avenir's overall design with a Best Concept Vehicle trophy.

"Avenir's global design team set out to make a striking design statement," said Holt Ware, Buick exterior design director. "The Avenir embraces Buick's rich design heritage of creating exquisite sculptures, precise in their design and beautifully proportioned."

Indiveri said that right now there are no plans to put the Avenir into production. But some of the design elements used in the vehicle should be making their way to future Buick vehicles.

"Winning this award was a nice surprise," Indiveri said. "Obviously, you want to win, but you never know what kind of competition you'll face or what other vehicles will be there to be judged. So winning was a surprise and an honor."



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Buick Enclave Sales Continue Their Steady Growth Pattern

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Indiveri said that these numbers are particularly exciting for Buick because the brand has been undergoing a change over the past half-decade.

“I’d say the term, ‘rebranding,’ is fair to use for Buick,” Indiveri said. “Our ads and our image were a bit of a brand problem and I think we’ve been up front about it.”

But by offering vehicles like the Enclave and the Encore, Buick has been able to change its image with the buying public. The brand was among the earliest to offer a small SUV in the Enclave, Indiveri said. Its sales have been strong over a long period of time.

The Encore is so successful, she said, that it owns 40 percent of the small SUV market, which, Indiveri added, is “remarkable” for a niche brand like Buick.

More than 450,000 Enclave models have been sold worldwide since its launch.

Enclave U.S. sales history:
• 2007: 29,286 (mid-year introduction)

- 2008: 44,706
- 2009: 43,150
- 2010: 55,426
- 2011: 58,392
- 2012: 56,703
- 2013: 60,534
- 2014: 62,300

“Few vehicles in any segment of the industry enjoy such a legacy of increasing popularity,” said Duncan Aldred, vice president of Buick. “In fact, many customers are enjoying their second or third Enclave.

“The Enclave has also been a cornerstone of Buick’s product renaissance, which saw a second consecutive year of record global sales in 2014.”

“The Buick Enclave was really the perfect vehicle at the perfect time,” said Karl Brauer, senior analyst for Kelley Blue Book. “It instantly expanded the brand’s reach by offering an attractive and functional SUV with luxury amenities.

“The three-row SUV segment was struggling in 2007, yet the Enclave drew a core group of buyers upon release and has continually expanded that group as SUV interest grew



2015 Buick Enclave

in recent years,” said Brauer. “This consistent growth curve is testament to how ‘right’ Buick got the Enclave at launch, along with how effectively the brand has supported its full-size SUV in the following years.”

Enclave received Kelley Blue Book’s 2014 5-Year Cost-to-Own award for the full-size luxury

SUV/crossover category.

“The Enclave continues to attract new and returning customers to its mix of its outstanding design, performance and safety features,” Aldred said.

The Enclave is based on GM’s Lambda platform and is related to the GMC Acadia and the Chevrolet Traverse.

Campbell, Hardt Take Key Posts at Cooper-Standard

Allen J. Campbell has been appointed executive vice president and chief infrastructure officer of Cooper-Standard Holdings Inc., the parent company of Cooper-Standard Automotive.

Campbell’s concentration will be in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the same time, Cooper-Standard appointed Matthew W. Hardt as executive vice president and chief financial officer.

Hardt will join Cooper Standard as executive vice president on Feb. 2 and become CFO on March 2, when Campbell transitions to the Asia-Pacific region.

Hardt will be located at the company’s world headquarters in Novi.

As members of the company’s Global Leadership Team, both executives will report directly to

Jeffrey Edwards, chairman and CEO.

In the newly established position of chief infrastructure officer, Campbell will ensure the financial, business process and information technology (IT) systems are aligned to support the growth of the company, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

The company’s IT department will report to Campbell as a part of the global infrastructure function.

As CFO, Hardt will have primary responsibility for directing the company’s corporate finance team, including treasury, internal audit and tax. He will also have oversight responsibility for investor relations.

“Given our forecasted growth, especially in Asia, it is important to have the appropriate infrastructure in place to support our global business,” said Edwards.

“Allen’s expertise with Cooper Standard business systems, experience leading the global IT organization and knowledge gained from his considerable Asia experience throughout his career make him the ideal candidate to lead this effort.

“We are also pleased to have Matt join the Cooper Standard team, as he is well-positioned to lead the financial functions of our growing global enterprise. In addition to his broad global financial experience and expertise, Matt is a Master Black Belt in Six Sigma and has successfully applied Six Sigma practices to help create world-class global finance organizations.”

Campbell has more than 30 years of corporate finance and leadership expertise, including considerable experience in the Asia-Pacific region.

He has been with Cooper Standard since 1998, serving in a series of financial and corporate leadership roles of increasing responsibility, including vice president of Asian operations.

Prior to joining Cooper Standard, Campbell held various non-automotive, financial and business positions for The Dow Chemical Company for 18 years.

He is a certified public accountant and earned a Master of Business Administration degree in finance from Xavier University in Cincinnati and a Bachelor of Arts degree in accounting from Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

Hardt brings more than 25 years of financial experience to Cooper Standard, most recently serving as senior vice president, finance for the industrial solutions, and before that, the consumer and industrial solutions divisions at TE Connectivity Ltd. (previously Tyco Electronics).

He also served as vice president of finance for Tyco’s specialty products group.

Fiat Chrysler’s January Sales Best Since 2007

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“We kicked off 2015 with a 14 percent increase in sales and extended our year-over-year sales streak to 58 consecutive months,” said Reid Bigland, head of U.S. Sales.

“In spite of some tough 2015 comparisons, we remain confident in our ability to post year-over-year sales increases on the back of strong retail demand for our products.”

Ten Fiat Chrysler vehicles set sales records in the month of January, including four of the five Jeep brand vehicles, Bigland said.

The Jeep Cherokee, Jeep Wrangler, Jeep Patriot, and Jeep Compass each recorded their best-ever sales in the month of January.

Likewise, the Chrysler 200, Dodge Dart, Dodge Challenger, Ram ProMaster, Ram Cargo Van and Fiat 500L each logged their best-ever January sales.

Fiat Chrysler finished the month of January with a 101-day supply of inventory (563,575 units), Kisiel said.

U.S. industry sales figures for January are internally projected at an estimated 17.0 million units Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR).

Jeep brand sales were up 23 percent, the brand’s best sales performance ever in the month of January and its 16th consecutive month of year-over-year sales gains.

Sales of the Cherokee were up 44 percent, the largest percentage year-over-year sales gain of any Jeep brand model in January.

The Grand Cherokee had its best January sales since 2004, Kisiel said.

Sales of the Ram pickup truck were up 14 percent in January, its 57th consecutive month of year-over-year sales gains, Kisiel said. It was the pickup truck’s best January sales since 1999.

Ram light duty pickup sales increased 17 percent in January while Ram heavy duty pickups were up 1 percent. Ram Truck brand sales, which include the Ram ProMaster, Ram ProMaster City, and Ram Cargo Van, were up 21 percent, the brand’s best January sales since 2004, Kisiel said.

Chrysler brand sales increased 11 percent, the brand’s best January sales since 2008, Kisiel said.

The year-over-year increase was driven by the new 2015 Chrysler 200 sedan, he said..

Sales of the 200 were up 30 percent, the mid-size sedan’s best-ever sales in the month of January and its seventh consecutive month of year-over-year sales gains.

Sales of the new 2015 Chrysler 300 sedan began in January as the first shipments from the Brampton (Ontario) Assembly Plant in Canada began reaching U.S. dealerships.

Sales of the 300 were up 1 percent in January, its best January sales in two years, Kisiel said.

Dodge brand sales were up 1 percent in January, compared with the same month a year ago.

Two Dodge brand vehicles set sales records to start the year. Sales of the Challenger were up 87 percent, its best-ever sales in the month of January and the largest percentage sales gain of any Dodge brand model in the month.

Likewise, the Dart logged its best-ever January sales with a 61 percent year-over-year sales gain. The Dodge Charger recorded its best January sales since 2008 with its 35 percent increase.

Fiat brand sales, which include the Fiat 500 and 500L, were up 1 percent in January, the brand’s best-ever sales in the month of January, Kisiel said.

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2015 Chevy Colorado

Pickup No.2 in Market Share

More 2015 Chevrolet Colorados have been sold in Los Angeles than any other city to date, and, according to Colorado Marketing Manager Tony Johnson, the 2015 *Motor Trend* Truck of the Year has overtaken the Nissan Frontier to become number two in mid-size pickup market share nationally.

"L.A. was a big target for the Colorado, where people can use the utility of a pickup, but don't necessarily have the space for a full-sized truck," said Johnson. "The inroads we've made there are proof that it is the right fit for that market."

GM spokesman Otie McKinley called the California market in general and the L.A. market specifically, the "hotbed" market segment for mid-size trucks.

"It's a solid thing for Chevy to be able to jump right into the California and Los Angeles market and achieve this success right off the bat," McKinley said.

"The Colorado, from our perspective, was always meant to fill the need for a mid-size truck. Both Ram and Ford have left that segment and there are a lot of people who want a mid-size truck who had to either move up to full-size - which is bigger than they wanted - or they would

have to go to foreign competitors."

More than 40 percent of Colorado buyers are trading in non-GM products, and Colorado customers are also younger, with more than 17 percent of Colorado buyers occupying the 16-35-year-old age bracket.

McKinley said that the California market is one in which GM has been working hard to improve its presence. He had no figures indicating that people coming in to look at the Colorado was helping other Chevy makes, but said that it's good anytime an automaker can get people into the showroom.

"I'll just say it," McKinley said. "With the Colorado, we're able to introduce Chevy products to a much broader audience, and I don't see how that can be anything but good."

Colorado owners also are buying into the active lifestyle the truck allows, McKinley said, with more than four in 10 Colorado pickups being ordered with factory-installed accessories.

Its layout is front-engine, rear-wheel drive and four-wheel drive. It's the successor to the Chevy S-10 and GMC Sonoma, and it's based off of GM's GMT 31XX platform.

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Ford to Add 1,550 Jobs, Increase Wages For Several Hundred Hourly Employees

As Ford ramps up production of the new F-150, the company last week announced it will add 1,550 new jobs across its Kansas City Assembly, Dearborn Stamping, Dearborn Diversified and Sterling Axle facilities in the first quarter of 2015.

The new jobs will support production and growing customer demand for the recently launched 2015 Ford F-150, said Ford spokesman Mike Levine.

With these new jobs, Ford has reached its entry-level allowance outlined in the 2011 UAW-Ford collective bargaining agreement, Levine said.

As a result, approximately 300 to 500 workers – the first group of “new traditional” employees – will transition, based on attrition and growth, from their entry-level wage of \$19.28 an hour to their new wage of \$28.50 an hour. The majority of these employees work at Kansas City, Chicago and Louisville assembly facilities.

“Thanks to stronger than expected customer demand, we’re adding 1,550 new workers to support additional F-150 production,” said Joe Hinrichs, Ford president, The Americas.

“These jobs are further proof that customers recognize the all-new F-150 as the toughest,

smartest, most capable F-150 ever. We sell every truck we can build, and we plan to build more.”

Of the 1,550 new jobs, 900 are allocated for Kansas City Assembly and 500 will be added between Dearborn Stamping and Dearborn Diversified, with the remaining 150 jobs going to Sterling Axle, Hinrichs said.

These jobs are in addition to the more than 5,000 hourly jobs Ford added across its U.S. manufacturing facilities in 2014.

“This is very exciting news and these additional jobs will have an impact in communities all across our nation,” said Jimmy Settles, UAW vice president and director, National Ford Department.

“This also represents a major milestone for employees hired under the entry level agreement, as many will now begin to convert to ‘new traditional’ wage status, as negotiated in the 2011 collective bargaining agreement.”

The entry-level agreement negotiated as part of UAW-Ford collective bargaining has helped improve Ford’s competitiveness and enabled the company to invest more than \$6.2 billion in its U.S. manufacturing facilities, Hinrichs said.

Ford has hired more than

15,000 hourly UAW members – exceeding its goal of creating 12,000 hourly jobs in the United States by 2015.

The new F-150 boasts a military-grade, aluminum-alloy body and high-strength steel frame, and while shedding up to 700 pounds for a lighter, more efficient truck than any previous F-150, Levine said. These weight savings lead to customer benefits regardless of model configuration or engine choice.

To manufacture the new Ford F-150, the truck team designed an innovative process that includes the latest in advanced materials and in forming and joining technologies, Hinrichs said.

The new manufacturing process called for the overhaul of both Dearborn Truck and Kansas City Assembly facilities.

Dearborn Truck saw its largest manufacturing transformation in decades wherein legacy manufacturing equipment was replaced with the latest in production technology, Hinrichs said. Changeover at the facility was completed last fall. Kansas City Assembly is currently undergoing a similar renovation that is scheduled to be complete in early 2015.

Combined, the two plants will



Ford’s new aluminum-alloy body means added jobs for UAW members.

have capacity to produce more than 700,000 trucks per year for availability in 90 markets globally.

F-150 is part of the Ford F-Series, celebrating its 38th straight year as America’s best-selling truck and 33rd straight

year as America’s best-selling vehicle, Levine said. Ford sold 753,851 trucks in 2014, and the F-150 is off to a tremendous start.

In January, Ford F-Series had its strongest sales month since 2004, which was the company’s best sales year for the F-150 ever.

Fiat Chrysler’s Super Bowl Commercials Score Big

The annual *USA TODAY* Ad Meter results are in, with Fiat Chrysler taking three of the Top 15 spots in the annual poll, and placing number one in the automotive category, said Fiat Chrysler spokeswoman Diane Morgan.

“The FIAT 500X Blue Pill” took the number three position overall (and number one in the automobile category); Dodge brand’s “Wisdom” took the number six position (the number two spot in the automobile category) and Jeep brand’s “Beautiful Lands” placed number 15 overall (and number five spot of all automobile brands), Morgan said.

The company’s creative efforts have placed in the Top 15 positions of all commercials the last four years, Morgan said.

Last year, the Chrysler brand’s “America’s Import,” with Bob Dylan, placed number 12 overall in the annual poll. In 2013, Ram brand’s “Farmer” took the number three position overall (and the number one position in the automobile category), and Jeep brand’s “Whole Again,” as narrated by Oprah Winfrey, took the number five position (and number two, behind Ram brand, in the automobile brand category).

The company’s “Halftime in America,” with Clint Eastwood, placed number four overall (and number two of all automakers) in 2012.

University of Detroit-Mercy marketing professor Michael Bernacchi said ultimately it didn’t matter as much how well Fiat Chrysler’s commercials were received by the public because the company did such a masterful job of controlling the conversation.

“Before the Super Bowl, people were asking if Fiat Chrysler were going to even have Super Bowl commercials,” Bernacchi said. “They were building up expectations and people were talking about the company even before they put anything on the air. They did an excellent job of building on their past success to get people talking about them.”

Web traffic for all three brands saw positive effects from their respective commercials airing during the game, Morgan said.

Site traffic for fiatusa.com was up 327 percent, and since the Super Bowl commercial aired, the brand has generated almost 50,000 social mentions, 95 percent of which are directly related to the brand’s Super Bowl commercial, said Morgan.

The Dodge brand, she continued, saw site traffic rise 14 percent (139,300). Since Dodge brand’s “Wisdom” aired, the Dodge brand has generated over



2015 Fiat 500X

63,000 social mentions, and of scored mentions, 86 percent were positive, Morgan said.

The Jeep brand saw site traffic rise 40 percent (201,000). Since “Beautiful Lands” aired, the Jeep brand has received over 43,000 brand social mentions, 90 percent of which were related to the Super Bowl commercial, Morgan said.

The Fiat commercial, “playfully and cheekily,” introduces the Fiat brand’s new crossover 2016 Fiat 500X, Morgan said.

The Fiat spot follows the epic journey of the “The Fiat 500X Blue Pill” as it slips through the fingers of an amorous Italian, skipping across rooftops, down a drain pipe, bouncing off villa walls, ping-pong across café tables and eventually dropping into the open fuel tank of a Fiat 500.

Given the “The Fiat 500X Blue Pill,” the vehicle becomes a “bigger, more powerful and ready for action” crossover 2016 Fiat 500X.

“The Fiat 500X Blue Pill” was created in partnership with Dallas-based The Richards Group.

Bernacchi said that, in his opinion, Fiat Chrysler’s commercials this year didn’t match what they did during past Super Bowls. But that actually was to be expected. No company can keep “hitting them out of the park” every time. The Fiat Blue Pill commercial runs the risk of people associating, at least on a subliminal level, the Fiat 500X with the need to take a blue pill.

He understood what Jeep was going for with its commercial. Showing that the Jeep has grown into a global brand. But he questioned using a song so closely associated with America – “This Land is Your Land” – with images of foreign countries. He also said that perhaps it would have been better to show Jeeps in those countries doing what Jeeps do, getting dirty.

But, Bernacchi said, Fiat Chrysler commercials are so anticipated at the Super Bowl, the company has already started a conversation about if next year’s Super Bowl commercials will “hit them out of the park” again.

“That’s a very good place to be for a company that is spending up to \$5 million for a couple of minutes of airtime,” Bernacchi said.

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GM January Sales Up 18 Percent from 2014

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the Chevrolet Trax and Buick Encore, and mid-size pickups with the Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon, was well-timed.”

Year-over-year pickup deliveries increased 42 percent, following last month’s 43 percent increase, McNeil said.

Large pickup sales were up 22 percent and more than 8,000 new mid-size trucks were delivered.

Sales of crossovers and SUVs were up 36 percent year over year, with the Chevrolet Equinox and Traverse, the GMC Terrain and the Buick Encore all posting their highest January sales ever, Cain said.

Chevrolet will unveil a refreshed Equinox at the Chicago Auto Show Feb. 12.

Highlights (vs. 2014 except as noted):

- Chevrolet had its best January total and retail sales since 2008.
- Silverado deliveries increased 25 percent and in just five months, the new Colorado has overtaken the Nissan Frontier to become No. 2 in retail market share in the mid-size pickup segment.
- Tahoe sales were up 88 percent, Suburban sales more than doubled and the Traverse was up 89 percent.
- The Chevrolet Cruze, which had its best annual sales ever in 2014, began 2015 with its best January sales ever, as did the Spark.
- GMC had its best retail sales since 2004.
- Sierra sales were up 14 percent.
- Every GMC crossover and SUV saw higher sales: Yukon and Yukon XL sales more than doubled; Terrain was up 25 percent

F-150 ‘Hottest’ Ford Product as Sales Increase

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

posted sales gains of 17 percent in January, with 54,370 trucks sold last month.

This was F-Series’ best January sales volume since 2004 – an all-time annual record sales year for F-Series.

Part of F-Series’ strength is the new F-150. “It’s the toughest, smartest, most capable F-150 ever, with best-in-class payload, towing and gasoline fuel economy and recently named 2015 North American Truck of the Year,” said Merkle.

“It’s averaging just 12 days on dealer lots. High-end Platinum and King Ranch F-150 are turning even faster, averaging just 9 and 10 days on dealer lots, respectively.”

Merkle also said that Ford is pleased with its car sales.

“Remember,” said Merkle, “Ford is a global car company. The F-150 may be our best seller in North America, but our best seller worldwide is the Ford Focus.”

Also, Transit Connect sales increased 72 percent last month, for record January sales with 3,689 vehicles. Combined, Ford sales of Transit, E-Series, and Transit Connect totaled 13,377 vans, marking Ford’s best January van sales results since 2001.

Escape sales of 20,054 vehicles increased 3 percent last month versus a year ago, for the utility’s best-ever January. Explorer sales of 14,995 vehicles were up 28 percent.

Mustang sales more than doubled last month with sales of 8,694 vehicles.

The Lincoln brand sales increased 11 percent last month versus January 2014, with 6,619 vehicles sold.

and Acadia was up 8 percent.

- The Canyon had its best January in 10 years following the launch of the new model late last year.
- Buick Encore deliveries rose 46 percent for its best January ever.
- Deliveries of the Cadillac XTS were up 14 percent.
- Demand for the new Escalade continues to exceed expectations, said Cain, with deliveries up 149 percent.

Cain said average transaction prices (ATPs) were \$34,800, according to J.D. Power PIN estimates through Jan. 25, up \$2,400 per unit compared with a year ago.

Month over month, GM reduced incentive spending as a percentage of ATPs, according to PIN estimates, Cain said. The company has had the lowest

incentives of all domestic automakers on an ATP basis in 11 of the last 13 months.

Incentive spending as a percentage of ATPs was 10.5 percent in January, down 0.3 points month over month, while industry average spending was 9.6 percent of ATPs, down 0.7 points, Cain said.

Commercial deliveries were up 17 percent, for the 15th consecutive monthly year-over-year increase. Truck, SUV and crossover deliveries all were higher.

Sales to government customers were up 27 percent, driven by crossover and SUV deliveries, including the new Chevrolet Tahoe Police Pursuit Vehicle.

GM estimates that the seasonally adjusted annual selling rate (SAAR) for light vehicles in January was 16.6 million.

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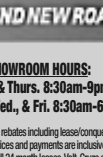
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Dennis Thacker
dthacker@edrinke.com



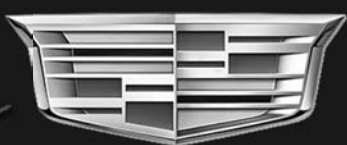
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Brown Named CEO of Ally

Ally Financial Inc. on Feb. 2 named Jeffrey J. Brown as chief executive officer, effective immediately.

Brown, who most recently served as president and CEO of Ally's Dealer Financial Services business, has also joined Ally's board of directors.

Brown succeeds Michael A. Carpenter who is retiring as CEO and from the Board. Ally Chairman Franklin "Fritz" Hobbs will work closely with Brown on all areas of the business.

"Jeff Brown is an extraordinarily talented executive with deep financial and operational experience and a strong vision of how to take Ally forward into the future," said Hobbs.

"Jeff joined the company in 2009 as corporate treasurer. In 2011, he became executive vice president of finance and corporate planning, where he oversaw the company's finance, treasury and corporate strategy activities.

In March of 2014, he was appointed CEO of Ally's Dealer Financial Services business.

"The breadth of experience Jeff has gained during these transformational years at Ally has prepared him fully to take on leadership of the company as it enters its next chapter."

Hobbs said that Carpenter has done an outstanding job as CEO and as a board member since joining Ally "at an especially difficult and pivotal time in 2009."

Among many other accomplishments, Hobbs said, Carpenter led the company's rebranding as Ally.

"Ally is a tremendous success story on many levels," Carpenter said, "and I am proud to have been part of it, working alongside so many tremendously talented people as we built what is today the country's leading



Jeff Brown

auto finance provider, powered by a growing direct bank.

"Having completed our IPO last April and exited TARP in December with a strong balance sheet and a market-leading position, it is the right time for me to step aside to hand the baton to the next generation of leadership."

"I have been working with the Board for several months on succession planning, and I am pleased that Jeff Brown, who was my recommended successor, has been chosen as Ally's next CEO. I have great confidence in Ally's future and believe it will continue to grow from strength to strength."

Brown said, "We are one of the country's largest providers of automotive financing products and services, combined with the consensus premier direct banking franchise in the country," Brown said.

"We are absolutely committed to continue serving our millions of retail customers and nearly 17,000 auto dealers with market-driven, innovative products and services supported by 7,000 dedicated Ally employees."

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