# Tech Center News...

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**Covers the Tech Center and the Immediate Area** 

**JANUARY 11, 2016** 

#### Newly Introduced Chevy Bolt Will Offer 200 Miles on Full Charge

Call it a sign of the times.

GM CEO Mary Barra unveiled automaker's new 2017 Chevrolet Bolt on Jan. 6 – not at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, but at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.

Over the past few years, automakers have been introducing new technology at CES, while introducing new models at auto

This vehicle, Barra said, fulfills GM's promise to offer a longrange, affordable electric vehicle for the masses.

The Bolt EV, which will go into production by the end of 2016, will offer more than 200 miles of range on a full charge, Barra said. It also features advanced connectivity technologies designed to enhance and personalize the driving experience, she said.

'It was less than a year ago that we revealed the Bolt EV concept and promised to deliver a long-range electric vehicle attainable by the masses," Barra said.

"The Bolt EV is capable of using the latest mobile app technology to enable car sharing, advanced GPS routing and gamification, all designed to enhance the ownership experience now and into the future.'

(Editor's note: Wikipedia defines gamifacation as "the application of game-design elements and novations will provide smart,

game principles in non-game con-personalized solutions for mantexts. Gamification commonly employs game design elements which are used in so-called non-game contexts in attempts to improve user engagement, organizational productivity, flow, learning, ease of use and usefulness of systems, physical exercise and traffic violations, among others.")

In addition to the vehicle's modern EV technology, Barra said the Bolt EV benefits directly from the suggestions and ideas of Volt owners and it features technologies that "make owning a long-range electric vehicle easy."

Barra also touted GM's dealer network and its ability to service the Bolt as an advantage that vehicle will have over other EVs on the market.

"We believe strongly in the dealer model, and the tremendous value our customers derive from neighborhood dealerships," Barra said.

"Unlike some EV customers, Bolt EV customers never have to worry about driving to another state to buy service or support their vehicle.

Barra emphasized that the size of Chevrolet's dealership network also gives Chevy owners the added security that comes with OnStar, "and our 20 years of experience in connected cars."

The Bolt EV's connectivity in-

aging the driving experience. For example, in the future, an accurate driving range projection will be based on the time of day, typography, weather and the owner's driving habits.

"We understand the importance of giving everyone the features they love, and that make their lives better," Barra said.

low-energy - designed specifically for the Bolt EV to minimize energy draw - seamlessly connects a smartphone to the car while the owner approaches the vehi-

"As you walk up to your car, the system instantly syncs with your smartphone to create a unique welcoming experience,

Features such as Bluetooth Barra said. It expedites cabin preconditioning, and quickly provides you with information about charging status and estimated range.

"It personalizes the car's home screen and loads your favorite music pre-sets. And because it pairs instantly with your phone,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3** 



GM CEO Mary Barra introduces 2017 Chevrolet Bolt EV at Consumer Electronics Show Jan. 6 in Las Vegas.

## Lower Gas Prices, Interest Rates Fuel Record 2015 Auto Sales

DETROIT (AP) - Americans are buying more new cars than ever before.

U.S. auto sales hit a record high of 17.47 million in 2015, topping the old record of 17.35 million set in 2000.

Analysts expect sales could go even higher this year as unemand more young buyers enter the

Automakers reported December and full-year sales Jan. 5.

Low gas prices and historically low interest rates left more money in buyers' pockets.

Nationwide, gas prices ended

ployment continues to decline the year at an average of \$2 per gallon, according to AAA. And while the Federal Reserve raised a key interest rate in December, it remains near zero. By comparison, that rate was 6.2 percent in

> Oliver Strauss, the chief economist at car-buying site True

Car.com, says the interest rate finally afford a new car. would have to reach 3 percent before it would cause car sales to stagnate.

Employment numbers also improved last year, so more buyers - particularly the huge generation of under-34 millennials - found they could

People who held off purchases during the recession were also lured back into the market by enticing new vehicles like the Jeep Cherokee and the revamped Ford F-150 pickup.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5** 



2016 Chevrolet Silverado

#### **GM December Retail Sales Up 8 Percent**

The year 2016 is going to be a tough one for GM to top, if the sales figures from December and 2015 are anything to go by.

In the month of December, General Motors' Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac dealers delivered 290,230 vehicles, driven by an 8 percent year-overyear increase in retail deliveries and the company's 26th consecutive month of commercial sales growth. Total December sales were up 6 percent.

Total sales for the entire year

for Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac was 3.1 million vehicles, including an 8 percent increase in retail deliveries compared with deliveries the previous year. The total year's sales were up 5 percent.

"The momentum that the Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra have carried all year, hits like the Chevrolet Trax and Colorado, and innovative designs crossover and truck sales. Mclike the GMC Canyon and Buick Neil said. Retail market share for Encore, have had a tremendous positive impact on our sales re-

sults," said Kurt McNeil, GM's U.S. vice president of Sales Oper-

"In a record year for the industry, GM gained significant retail market share and we grew our commercial business by 12 per-

GM's retail deliveries have grown every month since March 2015, driven by strong

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

#### Jeep Sales Up 42 Percent, Lead Fiat Chrysler

The year 2015 was a good one for Fiat Chrysler, specifically the automaker's Jeep brand. The company reported on Jan.

5 sales figures for both December and the entire year of 2015. FCA US finished 2015 strong, with sales up 13 percent and our

best December sales since we started business more than 90 years ago," said Reid Bigland, head of U.S. Sales.

"For the second straight year, the company has topped 2 million in U.S. sales.

"FCA US sales have now grown

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4** 



2016 Jeep Compass

#### Ford F-Series Keeps 34-Year Roll as Top-Selling Vehicle

When it came to sales in 2015, drove overall performance, with Ford just kept on trucking.

Ford Motor Company's total 2015 U.S. sales of 2,613,162 vehicles are the company's best annual sales results in nine years up 5 percent. Ford brand sales of 2,511,935 vehicles make Ford America's best-selling brand for six straight years, said Ford spokesman Erich Merkle.

U.S. December sales totaled 239,242 vehicles, up 8 percent versus a year ago, Merkle said. An 8 percent retail sales increase

174,509 vehicles sold last month.

F-Series sales totaled 85,211 trucks in December, up 15 percent. Strong demand for F-150 contributed to the performance, as F-Series broke through the 85,000 vehicle mark for the first time in a decade, Merkle said. For the year, F-Series sales totaled 780,354 trucks - making it America's best-selling pickup for 39 consecutive years and

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5** 

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#### Club GM Offers Reduced Prices On NAIAS Tickets

The 2016 North American International Auto Show is here, and Club GM has tickets for sale for those who wish to see the latest offerings of the auto industry.

And, better yet, the tickets are at reduced prices. Ticket sales chairpersons Len and Dianne Wernette said that adult tickets are regularly priced at \$13, but those purchasing them Club GM will pay only \$10.

Those wishing to purchase tickets can get them at the Club GM stores, or through Club GM ticket agents, located at various GM facilities in metro Detroit.

Joe Wrobel is the VEC building contact. He can be reached at 586-201-5553.

Jeff LaCharite is the agent at the GM Design Centerand his number is 586-689-5782. Joya Shepard is the Lake Orion Assembly contact at 248-377-5103.

Beth Cichon is the contact at the Milford Proving Ground. She can be reached at 248-953-

Barry Hensel is the Pontaic Powertrain agent. His number is 248-904-0398. John Gianetti is the Warren Powertrain contact. His number is 586-497-6116.

#### Boy, 13, Dies When Air Bag **Spews Fragments**

DETROIT (AP) - Honda Motor Co. says a defective air bag made by Takata Corp. was responsible for the death of a driver near Pittsburgh.

It's the ninth death worldwide attributed to Takata air bags, which can inflate with too much force and injure occupants with metal fragments.

A 13-year-old boy was driving a relative's 2001 Honda Accord Coupe on July 22, 2015, when the vehicle crashed and the air bag inflated.

The boy's family contacted the federal government in Decem-

After investigating, Honda and the federal government found that the boy's injuries were caused by a ruptured air bag inflator.

Honda says the automobile was initially recalled in 2010. A recall notice was mailed to the current owner the day before the

Takata said, in a statement to the media, that it's working with the government and Honda on the case.



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## GM's Mobile Technology - A Map to Vehicles' Future

General Motors is exploring a new mapping technology from Mobileye that could use crowdsourced real-time data collected by OnStar for precise localization and high-definition lane data that supports fully autonomous driving, said GM spokesman Alan Adler.

"GM is committed to bringing semi-autonomous and fully autonomous vehicles to our customers, and this technology will be a critical enabler to getting us there," said Mark Reuss, GM executive vice president of Product Development, Purchasing and Supply Chain.

GM is Mobileye's largest customer, Adler said, and is engaged with Mobileye Road Experience Management (REM) to create a continuously updated road map. Mobileye's existing EyeQ processing platforms extract landmarks and roadway information at extremely low bandwidth of about 10kb per kilometer.

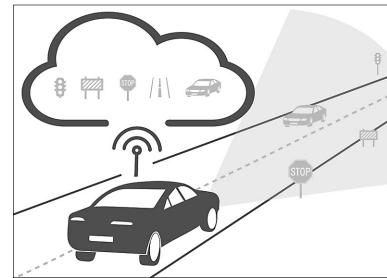
"Cameras are the most natural sensors for creating maps because they are already available in most new car models as part of the trend toward growing driver assistance deployment," said-Shashua. "Creating and updating maps using on-board camera technology supplies the missing link between on-board sensing and the requirement for full redundancy to enable safe autonomous driving.'

Mobileye expects to eventually achieve localization at an accuracy of about 10 centimeters compared with today's GPS, Adler said, which can pinpoint to about 10 meters.

OnStar serves more than 7 million customers with a 24/7 human touch, in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Europe and Brazil. OnStar recorded its 1 billionth customer interaction in

GM, Adler said, sold about 3.3 million vehicles in the U.S. in 2015, and uses Mobileye software on cameras that support existing safety technologies like forward collision alert. GM has collaborated on camera technology with Mobileye for a decade beginning with lane departure warning systems launched in 2007.

Mobileye, according to its Web site, is a pioneer in developing advanced collision avoidance systems. The company was founded in 1999 by Prof. Amnon Shashua and Ziv Aviram. Ever



GM is developing new tech to help cars "see" their environment.

since its inception, Mobileye's Jerusalem, is the world's largest goal has been to develop and market vision-based systems that will help drivers keep passengers safe on the roads and decrease traffic accidents.

Mobileye's development center, located in Har Hotzvim,

machine vision development center and employs approximately 200 research and development employees. In addition, the company has offices in the Netherlands, the United States, Japan and Cyprus.

#### Feds Sue VW Over Cheating

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Jus- danger public health and disadtice Department sued Volkswagen last week over emissionscheating software found in nearly 600,000 vehicles sold in the United States

The civil complaint against the German automaker, filed on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency in U.S. District Court in Detroit, alleges the company illegally installed software designed to make its diesel engines pass federal emissions standards while undergoing laboratory The vehicles then switched off those measures to boost performance in real-world driving conditions, resulting in greenhouse gas emissions up to 40 times greater than federal environmental standards.

"Car manufacturers that fail to properly certify their cars and that defeat emission control systems breach the public trust, envantage competitors," said John C. Cruden, the assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division

"The United States will pursue all appropriate remedies against Volkswagen to redress the violations of our nation's clean air laws alleged in the complaint," he said.

VW's top executive is traveling to Washington this week to meet face to face with the nation's head environmental regulator.

The company first admitted in September that the cheating software was included in its diesel cars and SUVs sold since the 2009 model year. The company is negotiating a massive mandatory recall with U.S. regulators and potentially faces more than \$20 billion in fines for violations of the federal Clean Air Act.

#### Barra New GM Board Head

The General Motors board of directors has unanimously elected Mary Barra as its next chairman, effective Jan. 4. She succeeds Theodore (Tim) Solso, who will continue serving as the board's lead independent direc-

Barra has served as GM CEO since Jan. 15, 2014.

"At a time of unprecedented industry change, the board concluded it is in the best interests of the company to combine the roles of chair and CEO in order to drive the most efficient execution of our plan and vision for the future," said Solso.

With GM consistently delivering on its targets and on track to generate significant value for its shareholders, this is the right time for Mary to assume this role.'

Solso said Barra has set a clear vision for the organization over the past two years, formed a strong leadership team from inside and outside the company, delivered strong operating results and led the introduction of breakthrough vehicles and tech-

"The board has improved the overall governance of the company over the past two years and, as lead independent director, I expect to continue to build on this solid foundation," Solso said. "The board also plans to broaden its active engagement with shareholders as we go forward."

"I am honored to serve as chair of the board of directors," said Barra. "With the support of our board, we will continue to drive shareholder value by improving our core business and leading in the transformation of personal mobility."



Mary Barra

Prior to being named CEO in 2014, Barra served as executive vice president, Global Product Development, Purchasing & Supply Chain since August 2013, and as senior vice president, Global Product Development since February 2011. In these roles, she was responsible for the design, engineering, program management and quality of GM vehicles around the world.

Previously, Barra served as GM vice president, Global Human Resources; vice president, Global Manufacturing Engineering; plant manager, Detroit Hamtramck Assembly; executive director of Competitive Operations Engineering; and in several engineering and staff positions.

In 1990, Barra graduated with an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business after receiving a GM fellowship in 1988.

Barra began her career with GM in 1980 as a General Motors Institute (Kettering University) co-op student at the Pontiac Motor Division. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1985.

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#### GM Invests \$500 Million in Lyft for Autonomous Network

The way people use modern transportation is changing - and GM says it wants to be on the cutting edge.

To that end, General Motors and Lyft - a ride-share company - on Jan. 4 entered into a longterm strategic alliance to create an integrated network of on-demand autonomous vehicles in the U.S.

In short, they're planning to create a network of drivers that people can tap into using their smart devices, said spokesman Vijay Iyer.

GM will invest \$500 million in Lyft to help the company continue the rapid growth of its successful ride-sharing service, he

In addition, GM will hold a seat on the Lyft's board of direc-

"We see the future of personal mobility as connected, seamless and autonomous," said GM President Dan Ammann.

"With GM and Lyft working together, we believe we can successfully implement this vision more rapidly.'

John Zimmer, president and co-founder of Lyft, said, "Working with GM, Lyft will continue to unlock new transportation experiences that bring positive change to our daily lives.

"Together, we will build a better future by redefining traditional car ownership."

Key elements of the and Lyft alliance, Iyer said, in-

 Autonomous On-Demand the U.S.



GM President Dan Ammann, center, with Lyft co-founders Logan Green, left, and John Zimmer

Network: The joint development of a network of on-demand autonomous vehicles will leverage GM's deep knowledge of autonomous technology and Lyft's capabilities in providing a broad choice of ride-sharing services.

• Rental Hub: Beginning immediately, GM will become a preferred provider of short-term-use vehicles to Lyft drivers through rental hubs in various cities in

 Connectivity: Lyft drivers and customers will have access to GM's wide portfolio of cars and OnStar services, leveraging two decades of experience in connectivity.

This will create a richer ride-sharing experience for both driver and passenger, Iver

• Joint Mobility Offerings: GM and Lyft will also provide each other's customers with personalized mobility services and experiences through their respective channels.

Lyft was founded in June 2012 by Logan Green and John Zimmer to reconnect people and communities through transportation, better said.

He added that Lyft is the fastest-growing ride-share company in the U.S. and is available in more than 190 cities.

#### **Chevy Bolt Goes** 200 Miles on **Full Charge**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

there is no waiting for connection.'

Many of the Bolt EV's driverfocused technologies are supported by OnStar 4G LTE, which turns the Bolt EV into a Wi-Fi hotspot, giving owners easier access to apps and services via a high-speed wireless connection.

Other connectivity and infotainment features include:

- 10.2-inch MyLink touch-screen display;
- Customizable, widget-based "flip-board style" operation;
- Rear camera mirror;
- Rear-facing camera providing a wide-angle view of the environment behind the vehicle;
- Surround Vision, which provides a bird's-eye view of what's around the Bolt EV for improved safety during low-speed driving and when parking.

The 2017 Bolt will also feature a new MyChevrolet Mobile App, which combines important owner and vehicle information and functions, such as:

- Vehicle charge status;
- OnStar Map service;
- Remote start:
- Cabin pre-conditioning;
- Owner's manual:
- Dealer service scheduling;
- EV Navigation Mapping.

The Bolt EV will be built at GM's Orion Assembly facility later this year, Barra said.





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#### 2015 a Good Year For Wholesale Used Car Prices

Wholesale used vehicle prices increased in December signifying the sixth increase out of the previous seven months, said Manheim Auction spokesman Yancey Casey.

Illustrating continued strength and stability, this brought the Manheim Used Vehicle Value Index – a measure of wholesale prices adjusted for mix, mileage and season – to a reading of 125.7 in December, Casey said.

This represents an increase of 1.5 percent from a year ago, Casey said, and is the Index's highest level in more than four years.

On an average annual basis, the Manheim Index rose 1.2 percent in 2015, after a 2014 increase of 1.5 percent. In 2012 and 2013, the Index declined by 1 percent and 1.8 percent respectively.

Something to remember is these four consecutive years with annual price movements of less than 2 percent represent the longest stretch of wholesale price stability in the Index's 20-year history, Casey said.

"A variety of macro-economic and industry factors have contributed to the ongoing stability and strength we're experiencing," said Tom Webb, chief economist for Cox Automotive.



#### Ford Testing Large Fleet of Autonomous Fusion Hybrids

Just in time for the 2016 North American International Auto Show, Ford is tripling its fleet of fully autonomous Ford Fusion Hybrid test vehicles.

This, said Ford spokesman Alan Hall, makes it the largest in the automotive industry – and will use a new-generation sensor technology as the company further accelerates its autonomous vehicle development plans.

Ford will add 20 Fusion Hybrid autonomous vehicles in 2016, bringing its autonomous fleet to about 30 vehicles being tested on roads in California, Arizona and Michigan, Hall said.

"Using the most advanced technology and expanding our test fleet are clear signs of our commitment to make autonomous vehicles available for millions of people," said Raj Nair, Ford executive vice president, Global Product Development, and chief technical officer.

"With more autonomous vehicles on the road, we are accelerating the development of software algorithms that serve to make our vehicles even smarter."

Building on more than a decade of Ford autonomous vehicle research, this expansion, Nair said, is a key element of Ford Smart Mobility – the plan to take Ford to the next level in connectivity, mobility, autonomous vehicles, the customer experience, and data and analytics. The newest vehicles are on Ford's third-generation autonomous vehicle development platform, built using Fusion Hybrid sedans.

Ford recently announced its fully autonomous cars will take to the streets of California this year. The company already tests autonomous vehicles at its proving grounds, as well as on public roads in Michigan.

Ford was the first automaker



Ford is accelerating testing of its Fusion Hybrid Research Vehicles.

to test a fully autonomous vehicle at Mcity – a 32-acre, full-scale simulated real-world urban environment at the University of Michigan.

Nair said Ford is using Velodyne's newest LiDAR sensors – named Solid-State Hybrid Ultra PUCK Auto for its hockey pucklike size and shape – on its thirdgeneration autonomous vehicle platform.

Solid-State Hybrid Ultra PUCK Auto sensors boast a longer range of 200 meters, making them the first auto-specific LiDAR sensors capable of handling different driving scenarios. Ultra Puck will accelerate the development and validation of Ford's virtual driver software, which serves as the decision-making brain that directs vehicle systems.

Solid-State Hybrid Ultra PUCK Auto's lightweight design makes it optimal for packaging on a vehicle, Nair said, such as on the sideview mirror. The design means Ford can reduce the amount of LiDAR sensors from four to two on new Fusion Hybrid autonomous vehicles, and get as much useful data due to the more targeted field of view.

"Adding the latest generation of computers and sensors, including the smaller and more affordable Solid-State Hybrid Ultra PUCK Auto sensors helps bring Ford ever closer to having a fully autonomous vehicle ready for production," said Jim McBride, Ford technical leader for autonomous vehicles.

The vehicle's hardware systems, which interact continuously with the virtual driver, are equally important, McBride said.

Third-generation autonomous Fusion Hybrid sedans will have supplemental features and duplicate wiring for power, steering and brakes. These supplemental features will act as backups, if needed, McBride said.

Ford has been using Velodyne LiDAR sensors for roughly a decade, dating back to Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency autonomous vehicle challenges, Nair said.

Ford was among the first to use the Velodyne LiDAR sensor, an innovation that significantly changed the autonomous vehicle landscape, Nair said. LiDAR emits short pulses of laser light to precisely scan the surrounding environment millions of times per second and determine the distance to objects, allowing the vehicle to create a real-time, high-definition 3D image of whatever's around it.

Ford's first-generation autonomous vehicle platform was built using a Ford F-250 Super Duty for participation in the DARPA challenges in 2005 and 2007, Hall said. In 2013, Ford introduced its second-generation autonomous vehicle platform, using a Fusion Hybrid sedan.

Ford was one of only six teams to participate in both the DARPA Desert Classic and Urban Finals challenges, supported by four engineers who still are on the company's autonomous vehicle development team.

"We've come a long way since DARPA," said McBride. "A decade ago, no one in the field knew what the art of the possible was. Today, we're all hustling to make the most ambitious dreams become a reality."

The first-generation autonomous vehicle platform helped Ford understand that fully autonomous driving was technically feasible in the near future, and – through ambitious research – how it could achieve this.

Fusion Hybrid sedans were chosen for the second-generation vehicles because they have the newest and most advanced electrical architecture, Nair

With the latest generation of computers and sensors – including the smaller, but more advanced Velodyne LiDAR HDL-32E sensor – Ford's autonomous vehicle platform moved a step closer to production.

The objective of the secondgeneration vehicle fleet is to test many of the computing and sensor components required to achieve fully autonomous driving capability, as defined by SAE International Level 4, which does not require the driver to intervene and take control of the vehicle, Nair said. Last summer, Ford transitioned from the research phase of development to the advanced engineering phase.

#### Jeep Sales Lead Fiat Chrysler with 42 Percent Jump

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

annually for the past six years."

Fiat Chrysler spokesman Ralph Kisiel said the Jeep, Dodge, Ram Truck and Fiat brands each posted year-overyear sales gains in December compared with the same month a year ago.

The Jeep brand's 42 percent increase was the largest sales gain of any FCA US brand during the month, Kisiel said. The group extended its streak of year-over-year sales gains to 69 consecutive months.

While the news of Jan. 5 was generally good, not all of Fiat Chrysler's brands were as successful as Jeep.

The Chrysler 200 reported December sales of 8,579, a 47 percent decline from the 16,229 sold in December of 2014. Overall, Chrysler sold 117,363 200s in 2015, compared with 177,889

sold in 2014.

In a year when Jeep brand sales were up 25 percent compared with 2014, Chrysler brand sales were up only 5 percent. The introduction of a new Town & Country was part of that equation

Overall, Kisiel said, Chrysler sold 93,848 Town & Countrys compared with 138,040 – a 32 percent decline. But the minivan will see a newly designed 2017 version go on sale in the first quarter of this year.

The Dodge Caravan minivan is also going to be new in model year 2017. It saw a similar sales drop of 29 percent – 97,141 vs. 134,152.

The Chrysler 300 saw something of a sales resurgence in December. Sales were up 22 percent over the previous year – 4,856 compared with 3,992. Overall, sales in 2015 were virtually identical to 2014 – 53,109 vs. 53.382.

All of the Jeep brand's vehicles saw sales increases in 2015.







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2016 Ford F-150 Limited

#### Ford F-Series Keeps 34-Year Roll as Top-Selling Vehicle

slight sales decline in December.

Ford sold 8,742 in December of

2015 compared to 9,511 in De-

On the other hand, the Ford

Focus saw a 7.8 percent sales de-

cline in 2015 - 202,487 versus

Lincoln sales totaled 10,860 ve-

Strong performance from the

hicles for the month, represent-

ing a 12 percent increase and a

new Lincoln MKX, with 2,960 ve-

hicles sold, resulted in a 77 per-

cent increase compared with a

year ago. Lincoln MKZ sales were

13 percent retail gain.

3,207, up 22 percent.

cember of 2014.

219,634.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

selling vehicle for 34 straight years.

"December capped off six straight months of year-over-year sales gains for F-Series, with strong increases coming from both retail sales and the strength of commercial fleet orders, as we closed out 2015," said Mark La-Neve, Ford vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service. "Ford-brand SUVs delivered their best sales results in more than a decade, with our newest SUVs leaving dealer lots in a matter of days."

Ford sold a total of 220,586 vans in 2015. This was an increase of 32 percent compared with the year prior and represents Ford's highest van sales performance in company history. For the month of December, Ford van sales totaled 21,549, a 6 percent increase over last December

Ford-brand SUVs totaled 65,675 sales last month – a 13 percent increase versus a year ago, for the best December performance since 2003, Merkle said.

Escape sales of 27,954 rose 9 percent, for a record December and a strong year. The Escape's total 2015 sales were 306,492, a 0.1 percent increase over 2014's sales of 306,212.

The new Edge delivered a 29 percent increase in December, Merkle said, with 10,263 vehicles sold. Overall, the Edge sold 124,120 in 2015, compared with 108,864 in 2014, a 14 percent increase.

The new Explorer sold 18,892 SUVs, a 14 percent increase, marking its best December performance since 2005, Merkle said. Overall, the Explorer sold 224,309 in 2015 compared with 189,339. This represents an 18.5 percent increase in sales.

December Fusion sales increased 15 percent at retail and 10 percent overall, making it Fusion's best-ever December sales performance with 25,576 cars sold. Overall, sales of the Fusion were down slightly in 2015 at 300,170 versus 306,860, a 2.2 percent decline.

And, Merkle said, Mustang sales were "very good" in 2015. The popular muscle car saw sales climb from 82,635 in 2014 to 122,349 in 2015. That's a 48.1 percent increase, despite the

#### Gas Prices Stay Low Statewide

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) – AAA Michigan says gas prices statewide are unchanged from the end of December.

The auto club on Jan. 4 said the average price for self-serve regular unleaded gasoline is about \$1.91, exactly the same price as previous week's average. It's 1 cent less than it was at the same point last year.

The average gas price in all 10 Michigan metro areas remains below \$2 for the sixth week in a row.

# Gas Prices, Interest Rates, Unemployment All Drop, Fueling Record 2015 Auto Sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Ford sold 780,354 F-Series trucks last year – more than one every minute – making it the nation's top-selling vehicle.

Analysts say the growth should continue this year, but at a slower pace.

One reason: Millions of cars will be coming off of two- and three-year leases and into the used car market, so some buyers who would have purchased new cars will go for used ones instead.

New-vehicle sales could rise as much as 3 percent to 18 million, says Kelley Blue Book.

That's half the pace of 2015, when full-year sales were up 6 percent.

Here are more details of 2015 sales:

• WINNERS AND LOSERS: General Motors led all automakers in the U.S. last year, with sales up 5 percent to just over 3 million cars and trucks.

Ford was the best-selling individual brand for the sixth straight year, with sales of just over 2.5 million.

Volkswagen, meanwhile, saw sales plummet after it admitted in September that its diesel cars cheated on U.S. emissions tests. VW's sales fell 5 percent for the

• SUV LOVE AFFAIR: As gas prices fell, Americans upsized. This fall, small SUVs became the largest segment of the market, at 14 percent, beating out small and midsize cars. KBB said.

Unlike 2000, when the midsize Ford Explorer SUV was the nation's third-best seller, small SUVs like the Honda CR-V are now the vehicle of choice.

Honda sold more than 900 CR-Vs every day in 2015; sales of the Nissan Rogue small SUV jumped 44 percent.

• FUEL EFFICIENCY BLUES: Low gas prices also have a victim: Small cars, hybrids and electrics.

Sales of Nissan's Leaf electric car dropped 43 percent last year to just over 17,000, while Toyota Prius hybrid sales fell 11 percent to around 185,000.

Subcompact cars were also hurting. Chevrolet Sonic sales fell 31 percent for the year.

• LAP OF LUXURY: Mercedes-Benz took the crown as the topselling luxury brand in 2015. Mercedes' sales rose 4 percent to 380,461, a U.S. record for the brand. BMW and Lexus were close behind.

Even during the recession, lux-

ury vehicle sales held steady, never dropping below 12 percent of the U.S. auto market. Now, with more lower-priced luxury vehicles on the market like the Mercedes CLA-Class, luxury sales are rising.

Luxury vehicles made up 15 percent of sales in December and are expected to make up around 13 percent of total U.S. sales in 2015, according to Kelley Blue Book.

• DECEMBER TO REMEMBER: It was the best December in history for the U.S. auto industry, with sales of 1.6 million cars and trucks.

Warm weather helped, along with the usual round of holiday promotions.

TrueCar.com said incentive spending rose 4 percent over last December to an average of \$3,063 per vehicle.

Toyota's U.S. sales rose 11 percent over last December.

Honda's sales gained 10 percent, while Nissan's were up 19 percent.

GM's U.S. sales rose 6 percent, Ford's were up 8 percent and Fiat Chrysler's sales jumped 13 percent

Hyundai's sales were down 1.5 percent, while Volkswagen's sales fell 9 percent.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

2015 is estimated to be up 0.4 percentage points, the largest increase of any automaker, according to J.D. Power PIN estimates.

McNeil said Chevrolet, GM's largest brand, has increased its retail sales every month since March, and the brand's 2015 retail market share, according to PIN, is up 0.4 percentage points compared with 2014 - the largest increase of any full-line brand.

"Chevrolet is the hottest retail franchise in the strongest market we have seen in this country,' said McNeil. The GMC brand gained 0.2 percentage points of retail market share.

Combined, Chevrolet and GMC sold 1.2 million trucks in 2015, up 14 percent from 2014. This, Mc-Neil said, includes 939,198 pick-

GM's retail share of the fullsize pickup segment improved by more than one percentage point to 39.2 percent, according to PIN.

GM's retail share of the midsize pickup segment is now 32.5 percent, up from less than 5 percent in 2014, the launch year for the Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon.

In the crossover market, the Chevrolet Equinox has increased its sales for seven consecutive years. Five other crossovers, the Chevrolet Traverse, the Buick Encore, the GMC Acadia and Terrain, and the Cadillac SRX had their best-ever annual sales.

"The U.S. economy continues to expand and the most important factors that drive demand for new vehicles are in place, so we expect to see a second consecutive year of record industry sales in 2016," said Mustafa Mohatarem, GM's chief economist.

"The single most important pieces are the ongoing gains in employment and the growth in personal income. When you add in lower energy prices, it's easy to see why consumer spending is strong.'

Cain said 2015 highlights include:

- Silverado and Colorado deliveries totaled 684,974 units, up 27 percent.
- Sierra and Canyon sales totaled 254,216 units, up 18 per-
- Crossover deliveries were a record 470,902 units, up 23 per-
- Acadia and Terrain sales were a record 208,423 units, up 10 percent.
- Chevrolet crossover deliveries were a record 470,902 units, up 23 percent.

#### **GM Hires More Employees at Lansing Plant**

LANSING, Mich. (AP) - GM says it's adding a third shift at a Lansing plant that makes the Chevrolet Camaro and the Cadillac CTS and ATS.

The automaker said Jan. 4 it will add roughly 500 hourly and salaried jobs to meet expected demand for the 2016 Camaro produced at Lansing Grand River Assembly. Hiring has begun and the shift is set to start in the second quarter. The plant will have about 2,300 workers once the third shift is operational.

The plant relaunched a second shift last summer, hiring 450 employees to make the Camaro, after discontinuing it earlier.







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\*Lease payment examples for Cruze and Equinox at GM Employee Discount Price plus tax, title, plate, zero security deposit, first month payment (first payment waived for Cruze) and doc. fees due at signing with all rebates including GM Competitive Lease Conquest Private Offer (customer's qualifying competitive lease must have a scheduled end date within 365 days of the delivery date of the new vehicle) assigned to dealer. \*\*Lease payment example for Silverado at GM Employee Discount Price plus tax, title, plate, zero security deposit, first month payment and doc. fees due at signing with all rebates including GM Lease Loyalty Private Offer assigned to dealer. Lessee responsible for excess wear and tear as well as exceeded contracted mileage. Due to advertising deadlines, prices subject to change. See dealer for details.

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OnStar just got a little better, and the lives of its users will be a little easier.

AtYourService, a multichannel platform providing owners of Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac owners who subscribe to On-Star with money-saving offers on products and services is adding Groupon and ExxonMobil as partners, said GM spokeswoman Deana Alicea.

Additionally, new functionality later this year within RemoteLink and the upcoming Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac vehicle apps will allow active subscribers to perform tasks such as mobile ordering, mobile payments and fuel pump activations with participating AtYourService partners, Alicea said.

'The AtYourService platform is all about delivering daily relevance and value to our connected customers, enhancing their ownership experience," Mark Lloyd, consumer online officer at OnStar. "Integrating great new partners like Groupon and ExxonMobil helps us deliver content and services that simplify our customers' lives and save them money."

Groupon, a global leader of local commerce, will add a variety of location-based offers for restaurants, salons, spas and retailers to the platform, Alicea said. Within the AtYourService tile of OnStar RemoteLink and the new vehicle owner apps, Groupon's marketplace of deals will be presented based on the location. phone's Active Groupon promotions will appear as a standalone search category, allowing users to find offers from area merchants. Groupon offers also will be accessible through OnStar advisors.



AtYourService on smartphone

ExxonMobil, with more than 10.000 Exxon-and Mobil-branded fuel stations nationwide, will incorporate new fuel and convenience store offers into the AtYourService platform, Alicea said. The Groupon and ExxonMobil offers will be available early in 2016, while the mobile ordering and service interactions functionality will come later in 2016.

In the last quarter of 2015, AtYourService users opened more than 130,000 money-saving offers, Alicea said. In addition, since the launch of AtYourService, more than 6,400 hotel reservations were made through a partnership with Priceline.com.

OnStar customers can use RemoteLink to access AtYourService before they start their journey. The app includes featured offers, sponsored locations and a category search tool to locate multiple options for dining, retail, fuel and more, Alicea said. The content will update based on the subscriber's location, time of day and day of the week.







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#### **New Electric Car** Unveiled at **CES Show**

LAS VEGAS (AP) - The automotive future according to a new electric carmaker looks an awful lot like a Corvette crossed with the Batmobile.

California-based Faraday Future debuted its sleek electric concept racecar Jan. 4 during the annual CES show that focuses on consumer gadgets and has increasingly become a way for carmakers to show off their latest technological feats.

The 18-month-old company that has remained much of a mystery until recently revealing its primary backer, Chinese billionaire Jia Yueting, won \$335 million worth of incentives from the state of Nevada last month to build a \$1 billion manufacturing facility in a hard-hit Las Vegas suburb.

Not even Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, who pushed for the incentive package and attended it's debut, had seen the concept car. Neither had North Las Vegas Mayor John Lee although he visited the California headquarters four months ago and saw "the intelligence building around the

"There was no doubt about it that that was the exclamation point," he said, referring to the negotiations to land the manufacturing plant in his city. He was convinced, he said.

Emphasizing the speed at which it will develop and build cars, the company's Senior Vice President of Research and Development Nick Sampson said the company would deliver its first production car in a couple of years.

Sampson said Faraday had so far hired 750 people globally with most at its California headquarters and planned to break ground on its North Las Vegas plant in a few weeks with plans to hire 4,500 people there.

He said his company would utilize digital design and testing of parts and modular construction, making it quicker than com-

#### Ferrari Begins **Future Without** Fiat Chrysler

MILAN (AP) - Sports carmaker Ferrari is following up its successful Wall Street listing with a stock market launch in Milan, as it begins a new era as a standalone company free of the massmarket associations of its former parent, Fiat Chrysler.

The company famed for its Formula 1 racing machines and coveted red roadsters began trading Jan. 4 morning, the first business day of the year, at 43 euros (\$47) under the RACE ticker. After a volatile day, the shares closed at 43.24 euros.

The listing, which comes after Ferrari made its public debut on the New York Stock Exchange in October, completes the company's separation from Fiat Chrysler Automobiles SpA.

The new company is controlled by Exor SpA, the Agnelli family holding company that also controls Fiat Chrysler, with a 23.5 percent share, and Piero Ferrari, founder Enzo Ferrari's son, who retains a 10 percent stake.

Ferrari Chairman Sergio Marchionne, who is also CEO of Fiat Chrysler, called the entry onto the Milan exchange "a new starting line" for the prestigious brand.

But he is treading carefully with plans to expand the Ferrari brand, whose value relies on its exclusivity. Marchionne wants to turn Ferrari into a luxury goods company in order to profit more from the brand's prestige.