

Future of Auto Industry Reflected at 2019 NAIAS

Ford, Volkswagen Formally Agree to Work Together

Well, the rumors that have been circulating in the media for the past several months are true. Volkswagen AG and Ford Motor Company have entered into the first formal agreements in a broad alliance that positions the companies to boost competitiveness and better serve customers in an era of rapid change in the industry, said Ford spokeswoman Jennifer Flake.

Volkswagen CEO Dr. Herbert Diess and Ford CEO Jim Hackett on Jan. 15 confirmed that the companies intend to develop commercial vans and medium-sized pickups for global markets beginning as early as 2022. The alliance will drive significant scale and efficiencies and enable both companies to share

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Hackett, left, and Diess talk about the new Ford-VW venture.

New XT6 Part of Cadillac's Plan to Remake the Brand

Cadillac made another move toward the brand's goal of becoming the pinnacle of mobility, said Cadillac President Steve Carlisle, with the introduction of the new 2020 XT6 SUV. Carlisle showed off the new vehicle at the Garden Theater in Detroit on Jan. 13. The SUV is currently in production in Spring Hill, Tenn., and will be available for ordering later this spring.

"We want the Cadillac brand to become the pinnacle of mobility," Carlisle said. "So we need to grow in the dynamic global marketplace. And by returning our headquarters to Warren, our designers and our marketing can work side by side. Last year, we sold more than 380,000 Cadillacs in the global market. The reward

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Carlisle introduces the new 2020 XT6 SUV, being built in Tennessee.

FCA Trucks Get Heavy

When it comes to heavy-duty pickup trucks, power matters and the 2019 Ram Heavy Duty introduced at the 2019 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) comes through. Reid Bigland, head of the Ram brand for FCA, said he was pleased to introduce the new Heavy Duty at NAIAS because it's where Detroit automakers go big. "I can't think of anything bigger than the Ram Heavy Duty 2500," Bigland said. "And Ram has really grown as a brand. It was created in 2009 and sales have gone from about 230,000 then to more than 700,000 now. The Ram 1500 accounts for 22.5 percent of the full-size pickup market. The new Ram Heavy Duty is proof that FCA and Ram refuse to rest on their laurels. This is the most powerful heavy duty ever." That's important because it's Ram's job to make the customer's life easier, Bigland said. The Heavy Duty's towing package is something that customers

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Trade War Delays China Firm's U.S. Entry Plans

by JEFF KAROUB and TOM KRISHER
Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) – The U.S.-China trade war has delayed but not derailed Chinese automaker GAC Motor's plans to enter the American market, company officials said Jan. 14. Company President Yu Jun, speaking at Detroit's North American International Auto Show, said the dispute is a factor in moving its U.S. product launch from the end of this year – as it announced at last year's show – to June 2020. Still, analysts think they might have a longer road to the market. President Donald Trump imposed tariff increases of up to 25 percent on \$250 billion of Chinese imports over complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology. President Xi Jinping responded by imposing penalties on \$110 billion of American goods. Washington wants Beijing to change its plans to use government support to make Chinese companies world leaders in robotics and advanced technologies. Chinese officials have suggested Beijing might alter its industrial plans but reject pressure to abandon what they consider a path to prosperity and global influence. A Dec. 1 agreement postponed further tariff increases. Economists say the 90-day postponement of additional tariff increases that had been meant to take effect Jan. 1 may be too short to

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Ram 1500 Earns NACTOY's Top Truck Award

It's good to be the belle of the ball. The new 2019 Ram 1500 has been named 2019 NACTOY's North American Truck of the Year by a panel of automotive experts. The award is unique and considered by many to be one of the world's most prestigious, said Reid Bigland, head of Ram Brand, based on its diverse mix of 60 automotive journalists from the U.S. and Canada who serve as the voting jurors. The winners were announced at a news conference Jan. 15 at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The NACTOY Car of the Year was the Genesis G70. Judges liked the car made by the Hyundai subsidiary for its ability to go toe-to-toe with cars like the BMW 3 Series as well as for its driver engagement and value for the dollar. The NACTOY Utility of the Year is the Hyundai Kona/Kona EV. Judges chose it because they believe it's the first mass-market

EV that truly works for the mass market. It is affordable and drivable, they said. The Ram 1500 beat out finalists GMC Sierra and Chevy Silverado. "The Ram 1500 is an important product for FCA and winning this award is one of the highest honors," said Bigland. "In what is arguably the most competitive segment in the automotive industry, for the all-new 2019 Ram 1500 to be named North American Truck of the Year is tremendous recognition of the FCA employees who design, engineer and build a pickup that truly stands out." Jurors cited Ram's eTorque mild-hybrid technology, luxurious interiors and 12-inch Uconnect touchscreen among their top reasons for selecting the Ram 1500 over competing vehicles, said FCA spokesman Nick Cappa. "When we set out to build the 2019 Ram 1500, we wanted to set the benchmark for luxury and performance for this truck category," Cappa said. "Since we've



The 2019 Ram 1500 was named NACTOY's Truck of the Year at NAIAS.

introduced the 2019 Ram 1500 to the public last year, we've won Motor Trend's Truck of the Year Award, Truck of Texas from the Texas Automotive Writers' Association and now NACTOY Truck of the Year. That's a triple crown for the 1500."

These awards from neutral third parties matter, Cappa said. "There is no more competitive segment in today's automotive market than full-size pickup trucks," Cappa said. "All the De-

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Owens said the new Shelby Mustang GT500 will have more than 700 hp.

Latest Shelby Mustang Has Power and Performance

by Jim Stickford

Ford's North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) presentation on Jan. 14 talked about the company's future while still remembering the company's storied past. Among the vehicles introduced to the public was the new 2020 Explorer hybrid and the new 2020 Shelby GT500 – a muscle car that is built on Mustang legacy.

Ford executive chairman Bill Ford said, "Ford has always been about changing lives for the better." He pointed out that predicting the future is difficult. "Twenty years ago, they were saying Ford wouldn't be manufacturing in America," Ford said. "Ten years ago, they were saying that Ford might not even make it as a company. But no one knows

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Warren’s Miller Branch Hosting Local Author

The Miller branch of the Warren Public Library is holding a special event on Thursday, Feb. 21, featuring local author Stephen Mack Jones.

Jones is a published poet and award-winning playwright, said Warren librarian Amy Moss.

He is a recipient of a Kresge Arts in Detroit Fellowship, Moss said.

His first novel, “August Snow,” was named a a Michigan Notable Book, Moss said. The sequel, “Lives Laid Away” was just released this month.

Those attending the meeting will also have the opportunity to purchase Jones’ work, Moss said.

The Miller Branch Library is located at 5460 Arden in the Warren Community Center (between 14 Mile and Chicago, west of Mound), Moss said. The gathering will be held in Room A.

Registration is required to attend. To sign up, call 586-751-5377. People can also go online at warrenlibrary.net to register.

Ford, Volkswagen Formally Announce New Joint Venture

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investments in vehicle architectures that deliver distinct capabilities and technologies, said Flake.

The companies estimate the commercial van and pickup co-operation will yield improved annual pre-tax operating results, starting in 2023.

In addition, Volkswagen and Ford have signed a memorandum of understanding to investigate collaboration on autonomous vehicles, mobility services and electric vehicles and have started to explore opportunities, Flake said.

“This has been in the works for some time,” said Pietro Zollino, chief of Communications for VW North America. “But that’s natural because such an alliance requires lots of talks to work to the benefit of both parties.”

Zollino said that this agreement leaves room for both parties to explore further opportunities together.

“This is very complicated,” Zollino said. “It’s sophisticated stuff that needs thorough preparations by two large companies. We are starting with commercial vehicles because it is the most obvious place to begin, the most cost-effective with the best economies of scale.”

The auto industry is changing rapidly, Zollino said. And both Ford and VW are big companies, but by working together through an agreement that benefits both sides, each company is able to move forward saving money.

“This is a good place to start,” Zollino said.

Both companies also said they were open to considering additional vehicle programs in the future. The teams will continue working through details in the coming months.

“Over time, this alliance will help both companies create value and meet the needs of our customers and society,” Hackett said. “It will not only drive significant efficiencies and help both companies improve their fitness, but also gives us the opportunity to collaborate on shaping the next era of mobility.”

“Volkswagen and Ford will harness our collective resources, innovation capabilities and complementary market positions to even better serve millions of customers around the world,” Diess said. “At the same time, the alliance will be a cornerstone for our drive to improve competitiveness.”

The alliance, which does not entail cross-ownership between the two companies, will be gov-

erned by a joint committee, Hackett said.

This committee will be led by Hackett and Diess and will include senior executives from both companies, according to the joint press release issued by VW and Ford.

Ford and Volkswagen both have strong commercial van and pickup businesses around the globe, with popular nameplates such as the Ford Transit family and Ranger as well as the Volkswagen Transporter, Caddy and Amarok, Flake said.

The companies’ collective light commercial vehicle volumes from 2018 totaled approximately 1.2 million units globally, which could represent the industry’s highest-volume collaboration as production scales.

Demand for both medium pickups and commercial vans is expected to grow globally in the next five years. The alliance will enable the companies to share development costs, leverage their respective manufacturing capacity, boost the capability and competitiveness of their vehicles and deliver cost efficiencies, while maintaining distinct brand characteristics, Flake said.

The press release stated that through the alliance, Ford will engineer and build medium-sized pickups for both companies which are expected to go to market as early as 2022.

For both parties, Ford intends to engineer and build larger commercial vans for European customers, and Volkswagen intends to develop and build a city van.

Shelby GT500 Provides Power, Performance

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Ford better than the people in Ford. We’re building the future and we’re not built on bailouts and hype.”

He then unveiled the 2020 Shelby Mustang GT500.

In the process of making the new Shelby GT500 the quickest street-legal Mustang ever, said Ford, “Ford Performance created an exclusive powertrain to deliver new levels of power and torque.”

“With its supercar-level powertrain, the all-new Shelby GT500 takes the sixth-generation Mustang to a performance level once reserved only for exotics,” said Hermann Salenbauch, global director, Ford Performance Vehicle Programs. “As a Mustang, it has to be attainable and punch above its weight.”

“To that end, we’ve set a new standard among American performance cars with our most powerful street-legal V8 engine to date, plus the quickest-shifting transmission ever in a Mustang for all-out precision and speed.”

Shelby GT500 starts with a supercharged 5.2-liter aluminum alloy engine built by hand. To keep the intake air cooler and deliver a lower center of gravity, the team inverted a 2.65-liter roots-type supercharger with air-to-liquid intercooler tucked neatly in the V8 engine valley, said Ford spokesman Jiyan Cadiz.

Like Shelby GT350, the aluminum alloy block features weight-saving, wire-arc cylinder liners and high-flow aluminum cylinder heads, plus larger forged connecting rods, improved lubrication and cooling passages. Beneath that, a structural oil pan adds strength, reduces vibration, and features a patented active baffle system to keep oil where it’s needed.

To channel power and torque to the unique carbon fiber driveshaft, Ford Performance leveraged learnings from the tuning of its Ford GT supercar’s dual-clutch transmission. The team selected a TREMEC 7-speed dual-clutch transmission, which can shift smoothly in less than 100



Shelby Mustang GT500 interior is designed for comfort, said Owens.

milliseconds – markedly faster than any manual gearbox, Cadiz said.

This dual-clutch transmission is designed for a number of drive modes, including normal, slippery, sport, drag and track, and features line-lock and rpm-selectable launch control through selectable Track Apps.

Ford President Jim Hackett said one of the best things about the GT500 is that it’s street legal and comes with the most downforce ever for a Mustang. It provides a supercar performance at a Ford price, he said.

Jim Owens, Shelby and Mustang Marketing manager for Ford, said that the Mustang in general, and the Shelby Mustang GT500 specifically, is more than a product – it’s a lifestyle, he said.

“The GT500 is an important piece of our heritage,” Owens said. “The latest version will be a limited edition made at Flat Rock Assembly. We haven’t done the pricing yet. We are keeping many of the details quiet.”

“We will release more information when we get closer to its sale, which will be sometime in the third or fourth quarter of the year. But we are saying that it will have more than 700 hp. Our engineers are still working on the engine to get as much power out of it as we can.”

And the GT500 is just the beginning, Owens said.

“By the end of 2020, Ford will

replace 75 percent of its lineup,” Hackett said. “Ford is doing more than it ever has before. The newly-launched Ranger is red hot. Ford just launched the new Explorer and we’ll be seeing the new Bronco shortly. And we are seeing the beginning of connectivity.”

All Ford vehicles soon will be connected to cloud, Hackett said. They will be able to “talk” to each other as well as with infrastructure such as traffic lights. This should help reduce accidents and make traffic flow more smoothly.

“Ford is moving quickly, but thoughtfully,” Hackett said. “This is not easy, but it’s about making lives better.”

Trade War Slows China OEM

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settle the disputes bedeviling U.S.-Chinese relations.

Yu said the 25 percent auto tariffs would cause prices to rise to the point that GAC’s cars aren’t competitive.

He’s optimistic that the trade dispute will be resolved in time for his company to meet its latest goal.

“China and the United States are the world’s two largest economies, so their trade tensions will not only affect these two countries but also the entire world,” he said through an interpreter.

“So we believe the leaders of both countries will show their wisdom and the vision for the common interest of the entire world.”

Yu acknowledged GAC’s “up-hill battle” to entering the U.S. market but he noted the company is making “steady progress.” In addition to opening the design centers in Los Angeles, Silicon Valley and Detroit, he said it expects to have its North American sales company running by March.

After that, GAC will start to establish a distribution network and build brand awareness in the U.S.



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Cadillac XT6 Launch One of Many to Come

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for doing that last year is that we get to do it all again in 2019. We are working hard to drive growth both here in North America and around the world.”

And the development of the 2020 XT6 is part of that larger strategy, Carlisle said. It was created to make the most of passengers’ time on the road.

This all-new three-row crossover centers on a luxurious, adaptable and connected cabin, complemented with responsive handling and a comprehensive suite of standard and available safety technologies, said Carlisle.

“The first-ever Cadillac XT6 delivers a compelling blend of spaciousness, safety and convenience features for customers who thrive on doing it all,” said Carlisle. “It joins the all-new XT4, which has soared to the top spot in its segment, our global best-selling XT5 and the iconic Escalade to accelerate the brand’s global growth, with a spirit that is uniquely Cadillac.

“Every seat is the best seat in the house. From luxurious appointments, comfort and convenience to premium sound and technology features, every passenger gets an optimized experience.”

“The new Cadillac XT6 models provide two expressions of the signature Cadillac experience, allowing more personalized appearance and driving character,” said John Plonka, chief engineer.

“Premium Luxury models provide an elevated level of refinement, while Sport models offer a performance-oriented feel.”

Part of being the pinnacle of mobility is having vehicles that are both comfortable and stylish, Carlisle said, adding that the 2020 XT6 advances Cadillac’s contemporary interior aesthetic, with elegant, wide surface lines and simple interfaces. It’s an expression that focuses attention on the quality and authenticity of materials and impeccable craftsmanship.

Distinctive trim and interior colors delineate the Premium Luxury and Sport models, said Plonka, noting that Premium Luxury models are trimmed with exotic wood decor, while the Sport features performance-inspired carbon fiber trim.

Available comfort features help ensure all passengers have a luxurious experience in every seating row, said Carlisle, including Cadillac’s first Bose Performance Series sound system with 14 custom-tuned speakers delivering audio throughout XT6’s cabin.

Additional available features include semi-aniline premium leather-appointed seating; Cadillac’s in-vehicle air ionizer; automatic heated/ventilated front seats and heated second-row rear outboard seats, and a standard automatic heated steering wheel.

Carlisle said. The XT6’s driving experience offers a rewarding balance of responsiveness and



The XT6 interior is designed for both comfort and function.

refinement, with a feeling of solidity that enhances driver confidence, Carlisle said.

Those qualities are distilled between the Premium Luxury and Sport models, with a greater emphasis on road isolation in the Premium Luxury and a greater feeling of agility dialed into the Sport’s chassis tuning, Carlisle said.

The XT6’s driving dynamics are powered by a 3.6L DOHC V6 engine estimated at 310 horsepower backed by a nine-speed automatic transmission featuring next-generation Electronic Precision Shift.

To enhance fuel efficiency, Active Fuel Management technology enables V4 operation when V6 power is not required.

NACTOY Names Ram 1500 Truck of Year

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troit manufacturers spend a lot of time, money and effort in creating the best trucks they can. So have judges say the things they’ve said about the Ram 1500 and give us the awards we’ve received has been a tremendous accomplishment.

“Full-size trucks are a bare-knuckle battle for automakers and Ram has done very well with the 1500.”

This is the 26th year of the awards. The 2013 Ram 1500 also won North American Truck of the Year honors.

The awards are intended to recognize the most outstanding new vehicles of the year, said NACTOY spokesman Brent Snavelly.

The winning vehicles are chosen to be benchmarks in their various segments based on many factors including innovation, design, safety, handling, driver satisfaction and value for the dollar.

Court Denies Ghosn Bail

TOKYO (AP) – The Tokyo District Court turned down a request by Nissan’s former chairman Carlos Ghosn for release on bail Jan. 15, prolonging his detention by weeks and possibly months.

Ghosn, 64, who was arrested on Nov. 19, has been charged with falsifying financial reports in underreporting his compensation, and with breach of trust in having Japanese automaker Nissan Motor Co. shoulder investment losses and make payments to a Saudi businessman.

His lawyers, who requested his release in the first week of January, appealed the Jan. 15 rejection.

That decision was expected since Motonari Ohtsuru, one of Ghosn’s lawyers, had warned that suspects in Japan often are detained until their trials start.

Ohtsuru said the complexity of Ghosn’s case means it could take up to half a year before it goes to trial.

Ghosn, who led Nissan for two

decades, asserted his innocence in court last week, his first public appearance since his arrest.

Ghosn says the compensation that he allegedly failed to report was neither agreed upon nor paid.

Regarding the breach of trust charges, he said Nissan suffered no losses and the payments were for legitimate services.

Tokyo prosecutors say they have enough evidence for a case, although they won’t disclose details until the trial.

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Ram 1500 Sales: 22.5 Percent of Full-Size Pickup Market

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will actually use. That's why Ram engineers worked hard to make the towing system easy to set up and do the heavy lifting for users.

"Ram Heavy Duty owners constantly demand the highest levels of capability to tackle the biggest jobs and with 35,100 lbs. of towing capacity, pulled by 1,000 lb.-ft. of torque from our Cummins engine, we now hold the most important titles within the segment," said Bigland.

"We've also surrounded owners in luxury and technology that, until now, was unavailable in a heavy-duty pickup. The highest-quality interiors, active safety systems and, of course, our award-winning Uconnect technology contribute to the best Ram 2500 and 3500 trucks we have ever built."

The standard engine in the 2019 Ram 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty is upgraded to the 6.4-liter Hemi V8, delivering class-leading 410 horsepower at 5,600 rpm and 429 lb.-ft. of torque at 4,000 rpm to handle the payload and towing requirements of the heavy-duty truck user, Bigland said.

Four-wheel-drive versions of the 2019 Ram 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty are equipped with a BorgWarner part-time transfer case. The 6.4-liter Hemi V8 and variant of the Cummins 6.7-liter Turbo Diesel drive power through either an electronic or manual shift transfer case, depending on the model.

Ram Heavy Duty trucks with the high output version of the Cummins 6.7-liter Turbo Diesel are equipped with an all-new part-time BorgWarner transfer case, Bigland said. This transfer case is designed to handle the higher input loads for maximum towing capability up to 35,100 lbs.

The new front and rear axles on the 2019 Ram 2500 and 3500 Heavy Duty have been engineered to improve durability, handle industry-leading payload and towing capabilities, and minimize Noise, Vibration and Harshness (NVH), as well as take advantage of opportunities to optimize weight, Bigland said. The Ram 3500 Heavy Duty is offered with a new, larger, 12-inch AAM rear axle to handle the class-leading power and capability.

"The 2019 Ram Heavy Duty is the most powerful, most capable pickup in the segment with a towing capacity of 35,100 lbs. and payload capacity of 7,680 lbs.," Bigland said. "But big capability is irrelevant if the truck fails to instill confidence to the driver. Ram redefines the

phrase, 'you don't even know it's back,' when towing or hauling."

The Ram Heavy Duty trucks feature a new frame built with 98.5 percent high-strength steel, six separate crossmembers, hydroformed main rails and fully boxed rear rails.

Although the new Ram Heavy Duty is stronger and more capable, lightweight materials in the frame, powertrain and an aluminum hood reduce overall weight by up to 143 lbs., Bigland said.

Two Active-Tuned Mass Modules (ATMM) mounted on the frame rails search out unfavorable vibrations and apply countermeasures to eliminate them, he said.

Heavy Duty trucks generally have a suspension equipped for

constant, heavy payloads. This leads to a harsher ride when unloaded, Bigland said. The 2019 Ram Heavy Duty includes Frequency Response Damping (FRD) shocks on all four corners.

The valves of an FRD shock automatically adjust for the type of vertical wheel input, allowing the Ram Heavy Duty to have sports-car-like suspension for handling and a supple suspension on rough terrain, said Bigland.

Engineers added progressive springs and upgraded bushings to the suspension system, including the exclusive five-link coil design on Ram 2500, providing better load-carrying characteristics and improved articulation over obstacles when compared to a leaf-spring system, he said.

Malaysia Sees Slight Rise In Car Sales

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) – New vehicle sales in Malaysia rebounded in 2018 after two straight years of contraction, thanks to a three-month tax holiday, but growth's likely to remain flat amid uncertainties over government policies, an automotive group said Jan. 16.

The Malaysian Automotive Association said 598,714 vehicles were sold last year, up 3.8 percent from 2017. It said this was largely due to an upsurge in demand from June to August 2018 after vehicle prices dropped when a new government that took power in May's general election scrapped an unpopular consumption tax.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's government declared a three-month tax holiday before reintroducing a sales and services tax in September. Malaysia is the third largest auto market in Southeast Asia.

Association president Aishah Ahmad said sales in 2019 are projected to rise by 0.2 percent amid economic uncertainties, a weak ringgit (monetary term) and inflationary pressure. She said car prices have also edged up slightly under the new tax regime.

Changes under the new government have also caused a delay in the approval for pricing of new models.

Plans to revise the national auto planning and develop a new "national" model also have raised uncertainties over future policies.

"We foresee 2019 will be another very challenging year," she said.

National carmaker Proton, privatized in 2012, has only a 10.8 percent market share.



The 2019 Ram 2500 and 3500 heavy-duty trucks have improved durability and towing capabilities – Bigland.

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NAIAS Still Place to Be ... But Not for Some Carmakers

by JEFF KAROUB and TOM KRISHER
Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) – At first glance, this year’s edition of the North American International Auto Show might look like any other from the past: gleaming vehicles, bright lights and flashy displays trying to lure spectators to their offerings.

But after traversing Cobo Center’s massive exhibition space and ticking off the automakers, you’ll notice what’s not there: namely BMW, Mercedes, Porsche, Audi or Mazda.

Those brands had been mainstays of the Motor City’s celebration of the auto industry, which opened to the public on Jan. 19. But they are pulling out not just from Detroit but shows worldwide because of a bad date for their vehicle launch cycle, a declining bang for their buck, or bigger buzz from solo events or digital campaigns that go straight to consumers.

In response, auto shows are retooling to remain relevant: moving their events on the calendar or amping up the customer experience by offering test tracks and collecting data on visitors.

Detroit auto show Chairman Bill Golling is helping the city’s last winter show before NAIAS prepares its move next year to the more weather-friendly month of June.

Warmer temperatures will allow for test drives of new vehicles and autonomous and vehicle-to-vehicle technologies, as well as reduced time and costs for setup and teardown.

“We can now give additional time and give that experience to the consumers,” Golling said. “Not only test drives of the product itself but the technology will be available to test drive it, the autonomy, the connected cars. They can’t get that over the internet.”

As companies have left, so have automotive reporters. The show had just under 4,600 journalists this year, but normally has more than 5,000, organizers said.

As for public attendance, Detroit has drawn around 800,000 for the past several years.

Representatives for the auto shows in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago say they don’t release attendance figures. A spokesman for the New York show would only say that it has drawn more than a million attendees every year for the past 15 years, and Los Angeles says hundreds of thousands attend annually.

Chicago Auto Show General Manager Dave Sloan says attendance is “pretty consistent,” but BMW and Mercedes-Benz have pulled out of next month’s show. He’s quick to add that others, such as Jaguar Land Rover, are increasing their show floor space.

“... technology will be available to test drive it, the autonomy, the connected cars.”

Bill Golling,
Chairman NAIAS

“We’re concerned about it,” he conceded. “We’re doing everything we can to try and show them that performance.”

Those efforts include installing indoor test tracks and outdoor test drives, he said, because “butts in seats is a great way to show off your vehicles.”

Still, the overall trend continues for companies to explore other promotional paths, and “not just for auto shows but globally in all different industries,” said Sam Abuelsamid, a senior analyst with Navigant Research.

“Big companies are increasingly moving toward getting away from announcing new products, making major announcements ... where they’re fighting for attention with 15-20 other companies and (instead) doing stand-alone events.”

Many automakers reject an all-or-nothing proposition.

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Nissan Announces Work Force Layoffs

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) – Nissan Motor Co. announced last week that it's cutting up to 700 contract workers at its Mississippi assembly plant, citing slowing sales for vans and Titan pickup trucks that it makes there.

The move follows Nissan's December announcement that it's cutting 1,000 jobs at two Mexican factories. Reports in May indicated the Japanese automaker would cut production by up to 20 percent in North America, citing low profits.

Jan. 17's move comes after the arrest in Japan of former chairman Carlos Ghosn, who led a production expansion in Nissan's largest market. The company has struggled to sell all those vehicles in recent years, turning heavily to incentives and fleet sales to soak up the excess. Spokeswoman Lloryn Love-Carter said the cuts are unrelated to Ghosn's ouster as chairman and new managers taking over at Nissan.

Nissan has 6,400 direct employees and contract workers who labor side-by-side on production lines in Canton, Miss., just north of Jackson. The company has long prided itself on a no-layoff pledge for its direct employees in Canton, and Love-Carter said any affected direct employees would be moved to new jobs.

But that doesn't apply to contract workers, who were cut sharply during the recession.

Love-Carter said the company is offering a buyout to workers 55 or older, and that at least some layoffs over the next 60 days could also be averted as workers quit through attrition.

"We are doing all we can to mitigate the impact to the associate workforce," Love-Carter said.

The company will reduce production of NV cargo and passenger vans from two shifts to one. It will reduce production of Frontier and Titan pickups from three shifts to two. Sales of the larger Titan fell 5 percent in 2018 to about 50,000, while sales of the smaller Frontier rose 7 percent to 80,000.

The Frontier will also face challenges in coming months, as Ford and Fiat Chrysler's Jeep division introduce new small trucks. Nissan plans a new-model Frontier to be made in Canton, which has a 450,000-vehicle capacity.

The company also assembles Altima sedans and Murano SUVs in Mississippi.

Love-Carter said production will fall and some jobs will be cut by attrition at Nissan's 1,600-employee engine factory in Decherd, Tenn., but that Jan. 17's announcement doesn't affect its 8,400-employee Smyrna, Tenn., factory.

Mississippi officials have pointed with pride to Nissan, the state's first major automaker. The company says it has invested \$3.4 billion in Canton since it opened in 2003, and the company has received what could be more than \$1 billion worth of subsidies and tax breaks over 30 years.

Nissan went through a bruising union election at the Canton plant in 2017, with workers rejecting United Auto Workers representation. At the time, 3,700 of the workers on the campus were direct Nissan employees. More than 62 percent of those direct Nissan employees voted against the union.

FCA Issues Air Bag Recall

DETROIT (AP) – Fiat Chrysler is recalling more than 1.6 million vehicles worldwide to replace Takata front passenger air bag inflators that can be dangerous.

Takata inflators can explode with too much force, hurling shrapnel into drivers and passengers. At least 23 people have died from the problem worldwide and hundreds injured.

The recall covers the 2010 through 2016 Jeep Wrangler SUV, the 2010 Ram 3500 pickup and 4500/5500 Chassis Cab trucks, the 2010 and 2011 Dodge Dakota pickup, the 2010 through 2014 Dodge Challenger muscle car, the 2011 through 2015 Dodge Charger sedan, and the 2010 through 2015 Chrysler 300 sedan.

It's part of the largest series of automotive recalls in U.S. history. About 10 million inflators are being recalled this year. Already Ford, Honda and Toyota have issued recalls in the latest round.

Fiat Chrysler owners will be notified by letter and dealers will replace the inflators with safe ones. The company says it's not aware of any injuries in vehicles involved in this recall, but says it has plenty of replacement parts and is urging people to get the repairs done.

"Recall service is free, we have replacement parts and dealers are ready to help," Mark Chernoby, FCA's head of safety for North America, said in a statement.

The recall includes 1.4 million vehicles in the United States.

Takata used the chemical ammonium nitrate to create a small explosion to inflate the air bags. But the chemical can deteriorate over time due to high humidity and cycles from hot temperatures to cold.

The most dangerous inflators are in areas of the South along the Gulf of Mexico that have high humidity.

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