

FCA-Peugeot Merger Is On

It's official. The proposed merger between FCA and Peugeot is going ahead.

The public first learned about the proposed merger on Oct. 31 of this year.

The deal was signed on Dec. 18 in London. In a statement to the media and public, representatives from the two companies stated the two automakers had "signed a binding Combination Agreement providing for a 50/50 merger of their businesses to create the 4th largest global automotive OEM by volume and 3rd largest by revenue. The proposed combination will be an industry leader with the management, capabilities, resources and scale to successfully capitalize on the opportunities presented by the new era in sustainable mobility.

"With its combined financial strength and skills the merged entity will be particularly well-

placed to provide innovative, clean and sustainable mobility solutions, both in a rapidly urbanizing environment and in rural areas around the world.

"The gains in efficiency derived from larger volumes, as well as the benefits of uniting the two companies' strengths and core competencies, will ensure the combined business can offer all its customers best-in-class products, technologies and services and respond with increased agility to the shift taking place in this highly demanding sector."

According to statement made to the media by the two companies, the "combined company will have annual unit sales of 8.7 million vehicles, with revenues of nearly €170 billion, recurring operating profit of over €11 billion and an operating profit margin of 6.6 percent, all on a simple aggregated basis of 2018 results. The

strong combined balance sheet provides significant financial flexibility and ample headroom both to execute strategic plans and invest in new technologies throughout the cycle."

FCA officials further stated that the combined entity will have a balanced and profitable global presence with a highly complementary and iconic brand portfolio covering all key vehicle segments from luxury, premium, and mainstream passenger cars through to SUVs and trucks and light commercial vehicles. This will be underpinned, they said, by FCA's strength in North America and Latin America and Grouse PSA's solid position in Europe. The new group will have much greater geographic balance with 46 percent of revenues derived from Europe and 43 percent from North America, based on aggregated 2018 figures of each com-



Chairman of the Managing Board of Groupe PSA Carlos Tavares (left) and FCA CEO Mike Manley share a congratulatory handshake.

pany. The combination will bring the opportunity for the new company to reshape the strategy in other regions.

The efficiencies that will be gained from optimizing investments in vehicle platforms, en-

gine families and new technologies while leveraging increased scale will enable the business to enhance its purchasing performance and create additional value

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Detroit OEMs Making Billion Dollar Investments in Future

FCA Continuing Detroit's Home Repair Program

Christmas is a time for giving, something that FCA has not forgotten.

The company has completed the transfer of \$900,000 to the city of Detroit's Housing & Revitalization Department (HRD) – the first portion of a \$1.8 million commitment – to fund a home repair grant program for homeowners on the city's east side, said FCA spokesman Kevin Frazier.

The program, one component of the Community Benefits Agreement FCA signed in May, provides eligible homeowners living near FCA's new assembly plant on Mack Avenue with grants of up to \$15,000 per property to invest in home repairs.

"Home ownership has widely been considered a part of the 'American Dream,'" Mark Stewart, FCA North America's chief operating officer, said. "We want to help our neighbors keep their dreams alive by providing them with an opportunity to invest in their homes."

In a departure from similar programs, the FCA-funded home repair program is tailored to the needs of individual homeowners and, most importantly, homeowners are not required to repay the (non-cash) grants.

"This is the type of opportunity, along with the jobs we're bringing to the city, that will help this community continue to grow and thrive for many years to come," Stewart said.

The initial phase of the grant program kicked off in mid-August with homeowners on Beniteau Street (between Kercheval Avenue and Warren Avenue). A HRD inspector is working with homeowners to determine which repairs are a priority and is bidding work out to a list of pre-qualified contractors, Frazier said.

It is anticipated that owner-



Ford employee Duane Moore applies a badge to a Ranger. Ford invested \$850 million in the Michigan Assembly to retool the plant for new trucks.

Ford to Add 3,000 New Jobs, Spend \$1.5B in Michigan

Building the next generation of modern autonomous and electric vehicles will require having next-generation production facilities.

That's why Ford Motor Company is investing more than \$1.45 billion in two southeast Michigan manufacturing facilities and adding 3,000 new jobs to strengthen its leadership in trucks and SUVs and support the company's expansion into electric and autonomous vehicles, said Ford spokeswoman Kelli Felker.

Ford is investing approximately \$750 million and adding 2,700 new direct jobs at its manufacturing facility in Wayne during

the next three years, Felker said. Ford will install new equipment to support production of the all-new Ford Bronco and Ford Ranger, as well as create a new modification center at the Wayne location.

Employees at Ford's Autonomous Vehicle, Bronco and Ranger modification center in Wayne will complete Ford's first autonomous vehicles starting in 2021, including installing the vehicles' unique self-driving technology and unique purpose-built interiors, Felker said.

This will be the first center of its kind for Ford and will drive

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GM to Allocate \$1B for New Mid-Size Truck at Wentzville

It's been a busy couple of weeks for GM. First, the company unveiled the new Chevy Suburban and Tahoe SUVs, which will be on sale early next year.

To make those new vehicles, GM invested \$1.4 billion in the Arlington, Texas, assembly plant.

Then GM revealed plans on Dec. 13 that the company will be making another large investment to build the next generation of mid-sized trucks.

General Motors plans to invest \$1.5 billion to bring its next generation of midsize pickup trucks to market, said GM spokesman Dan Flores. GM's Wentzville, Mo., truck plant will receive \$1 billion of this investment to upgrade the facility in preparation for the new products.

This investment is expected to retain about 4,000 good-paying U.S. manufacturing jobs at the Wentzville site, Flores said. Specific information related to GM's next generation of mid-size trucks is not being released at this time.

The Wentzville plant's paint



Johnson (left) and Reuss speak with employees at GM's Wentzville plant about how the site will be retooled.

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FCA Joins Green Platform

Being a green automobile manufacturer means more than making green cars. It also means making cars in a green way, said FCA spokeswoman Kaileen Connelly.

That's why FCA has joined the Responsible Sourcing Blockchain Network (RSBN), an industry collaboration using blockchain technology to support sustainable, responsible sourcing and production practices from mine to market.

Built on the IBM Blockchain Platform and assured by RCS Global Group, the RSBN is on track to become commercially operational by spring 2020, said Connelly. Simultaneously, FCA will work with RSBN to launch a global audit and trace of cobalt in its supply chain.

Traceability and mapping of raw materials are essential to more efficiently and preemptively mitigate unethical practices that threaten the future for the communities where the raw materials are sourced.

"Our commitment to the responsible procurement of raw materials is vital to the integrity and sustainability of our supply chain, especially as our electrification strategy ramps up," said Carl Smiley, FCA's chief Purchasing and Supply Chain officer.

"Embarking on this journey together with technology and industry leaders will propel our ability to have visibility into artisanal and small-scale mines, allowing us to better manage the social and environmental impacts of our business."

FCA intends to launch more than 30 electrified nameplates by 2022, said Connelly, and the consortium will help enable a responsible supply chain of cobalt, which is used in lithium-ion batteries that power electric vehicles.

RSBN is building an open, in-

dustry-wide blockchain platform to trace responsibly produced minerals from source through to end product, with RCS Global assessing each participating entity against responsible sourcing requirements set by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and industry bodies. RSBN participants include Ford Motor Company, Volkswagen Group, Volvo, LG Chem and Huayou Cobalt.

"We are hugely excited that Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, one of the world's leading auto manufacturers, has joined the RSBN. With this move, FCA signals its intent to robustly address the issue of responsible sourcing in its supply chain and we look forward to working with them to achieve this," said Dr. Nicholas Garrett, CEO, RCS Global Group.

"The RSBN is expanding rapidly, connecting actors throughout the battery supply chain and beyond, all of whom have a focus on proving good practice in responsible sourcing and production."

"We are excited to welcome FCA to the Responsible Sourcing Blockchain Network as this will help to expand the benefits of the network to many more participants across their global supply chain," said Dirk Wollschlager, general manager, IBM Global Automotive, Aerospace and Defense Industries. "RSBN has already made significant progress in improving ethical sourcing of minerals."

Additionally, FCA recently contributed to the Responsible Business Alliance (RBA) Foundation Upstream Due Diligence Smelter Fund to help enable smelters and refiners to partially offset the costs of on-the-ground due diligence activities, in line with the Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) due diligence guidelines.

Southfield Auto Supplier Grede Completes Transition to Independent Operation

Cary Wood has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Grede, which last week began its first day of operations as an independent company.

Grede is a developer, manufacturer assembler and supplier of ductile, gray, and specialty iron castings and machined components for automotive, commercial vehicle and industrial markets.

As announced in September, Gamut Capital Management, a New York-based private investment firm, agreed to acquire Grede from American Axle & Manufacturing Holdings, said Grede spokesman John Tews.

Based in Southfield, Grede has approximately 3,800 employees across 10 facilities in Alabama, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina and Wisconsin, Tews said.

Grede has a long history of success dating back to its founding in 1920 when William J. Grede purchased Liberty Foundry near Milwaukee.

In other Grede moves, Paul Suber has been named chief operating officer, Mike Lobbia chief financial officer and Tony Lovell president-head of Commercial, Tews said.

Wood previously held leadership roles at Grede from 2004 to 2008, including COO until he was appointed interim CEO of the Grede predecessor, Citation, prior to the merger with AAM. He rejoins the company after serving in CEO roles at both public companies and private equity-backed businesses.

Suber joins Grede from Autokinton Global Group, where he served as executive vice president of Operations and Business Development. Lobbia comes to

Grede from General Motors, where he most recently served as CFO of Global Purchasing & Supply Chain. Lovell joined Grede in 2009 and most recently served as vice president of Sales of the Casting division under AAM.

He is also familiar with operations after having spent a stint in Operations as the vice president of the Industrial & Ag Group of the Casting division.

"I'm honored to be part of Grede again with its proud history and promising future," said Wood. "Gamut is a true partner and they recognize the value we provide our customers as well as the many growth opportunities across our business. Gamut has taken a disciplined approach to provide maximum capital structure flexibility for the company to navigate the marketplace, and is fully committed to supporting Grede with further investment in organic and inorganic growth opportunities."

"Together we will set high standards for Grede and hold ourselves accountable to our

customers, partners and employees. We must set the bar high if we're going to compete in today's market. We have a goal of not just being 'a leader' but 'the leader' in metal castings in our markets."

"For nearly a century," said Jordan Zaken, founding partner of Gamut, "Grede has been an industry leader in iron casting for the transportation industry."

As a premier Tier I supplier in diverse markets, Grede has broad capabilities across multiple product lines that can deliver efficient, powerful and innovative solutions for its customers, Tews said.

The company has grown through a series of acquisitions, Tews said. In February 2010, Grede combined assets with Citation Corporation to create the most diversified foundry company in North America.

In August 2014, Metaldyne Performance Group (MPG) was formed by the joining of Metaldyne, HHI and Grede, and in 2017, MPG was purchased by AAM Holdings, Inc.

GM Has Recall of Pickups, Sedans

DETROIT (AP) – GM is recalling more than 814,000 pickup trucks and cars in the U.S. to fix problems with electronic brake controls and battery cables.

The first recall covers nearly 464,000 Cadillac CT6 sedans and Chevrolet Silverado 1500 and GMC Sierra 1500 pickup trucks from 2019. The company says in government documents that a software error can disable the electronic stability control and antilock brake systems. That can increase the risk of a crash.

Dealers will reprogram the

brake computer starting Jan. 27, according to documents posted Thursday on the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website.

The second recall covers over 350,000 2019 and 2020 Silverado and Sierra 1500 pickups. A cable connecting the battery and alternator may have too much glue on it. That can interrupt the electrical connection and possibly cause the trucks to stall or even catch fire. Starting Jan. 27, dealers will inspect the cables and clean the connectors if needed.

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EV Finished 3,000 Mile Race

“Ride, powered by *Kelley Blue Book*,” editors successfully finished a cross-country drive mimicking the famed non-stop coast-to-coast “Cannonball Run Challenge.”

“Ride” was launched in May 2019, was built to help educate and empower consumers about the technology that is rapidly transforming the movement of people and goods today and in the future, said *Kelley* spokeswoman Brenna Buehler.

Unlike the dozens of other attempts during the past century, which have primarily used combustion engines, the team drove coast-to-coast in a pure-electric Audi e-tron crossover. The continuous 3,025-mile trek, which took just more than 60 hours.

New-for-2019, the Audi e-tron was selected for its highway efficiency, interior space and ability to re-charge its 95 kilowatt battery to an 80 percent state-of-charge in just 27 minutes.

“The battery pack in the e-tron was engineered for repeatable performance, longevity and peak charging power,” said Mark Dah-ncke, communications director at Audi of America. “As a result, it delivers the fastest charging speed of any electric SUV, which was crucial when duplicating the Cannonball Run.”

The three-person driving team, which included Ride’s Jeff Gluck-er, Josh Ostrander and Micah Muzio, utilized the Electrify America charging network.

“As of today, we have placed more than 1,650 DC fast chargers at more than 360 highway and metro locations across the United States,” said Mike Moran, head of communications at Electrify America. “An ease of accessibility, combined with our innovative mobile app payment process, allowed the team to effortlessly stop at regular intervals along their route for rapid charging.”

GM Arlington Site Underwent Considerable Retooling to Make New Tahoe, Suburban

A new edition of the Chevy Tahoe and Suburban will require new equipment to build the vehicles in the most efficient way possible.

So a 1.6-million-square-foot expansion of General Motors’ Arlington Assembly facility in Texas was done to improve production-efficiency and build-quality of the 2021 Chevrolet Tahoe and Suburban, said GM spokesman Tom Read.

The investment of more than \$1.4 billion for the plant includes a new 1-million-square-foot body shop and a 600,000-square-foot expansion of the paint shop, along with new, high-precision camera- and laser-based inspection systems that offer more sophisticated quality checks for the SUVs.

“Everything we do at Arlington Assembly is focused on building better vehicles for our customers,” said Bill Kulhanek, plant executive director. “This strategic expansion brings the latest in manufacturing and inspection technologies, while adding procedures designed to improve the quality and durability of the Tahoe and Suburban.”

The Arlington investment also accommodates fundamental changes in the new vehicles’ design, including:

- A stronger body architecture with an integrated front end.
- A new, available panoramic sunroof.
- A new underbody structure designed for the Tahoe and Suburban’s independent rear suspension, which is the foundation for a roomier third row, improved ride and handling, and greater cargo capacity.
- The latest digital vehicle platform that supports more advanced safety features, the capability for over-the-air updates and future technology add-ons.
- New underbody sealing designed to increase the vehicles’ long-term durability.
- A new electro-hydraulic brake system that replaces the previous conventional braking system, requiring new installation procedures.
- Standard LED headlamps that require a new, automated alignment procedure.

“More than the physical changes, the Arlington upgrades increase assembly flexibility in the plant, allowing for more model and trim variations,” Kulhanek said. “That means more choices for customers. In fact, the trim range for Tahoe and Suburban expands to six, with distinct designs and features on each.”

The Arlington plant upgrades are part of GM’s \$5 billion investment in U.S. production of new, full-size pickups and SUVs. GM previously invested in enhancements at Fort Wayne Assembly to support production of the 2019 Chevrolet Silverado 1500; and at Flint Assembly, ahead of the 2020 Chevrolet Silverado HD’s launch.

Arlington’s new, 1-million-square-foot body shop comprises the largest phase of the plant’s expansion and upgrades, Read said. GM uses the latest in assembly and quality-assurance technologies to assemble the Tahoe and Suburban bodies with exceptional precision. New features include:

- New robots – 1,450 of them – including the latest six-axis robotic systems, that nearly

double the number from the previous body shop, to optimize efficiency and quality.

- Automated vision-system-based dimensional and parts placement stations that use cameras and lasers to more accurately locate body components for assembly and ensure dimensional accuracy prior to welding for proper gaps and flushness.
- Non-contact inspection systems that accommodate temperature fluctuations and other variables in the plant, improving consistency and accuracy.
- Cameras and laser scanners to locate points in body panels that must be pierced for fasteners, contributing to more precise panel alignment during assembly.
- A laser-based quality audit system that uses robot-mounted Leica scanners to quickly produce color maps of assembled bodies to ensure dimensional accuracy.

The body shop’s new systems support the SUVs’ new body structure, which features an integrated front-end assembly that is welded to the rest of the body, rather than bolted on later in the assembly process. This improves the visual quality with improved flushness of the front-end body panels with the rest of the body.

Revamped in 2013 as part of a \$200 million investment, Arlington Assembly has one of the most efficient, contiguous stamping operations in the industry, accommodating steel and aluminum components (the new SUVs feature lightweight aluminum doors, hood and lift gate panels), along with the capability of high-speed die changes to accommodate greater model variation, Read said.

In fact, die changes such as changing between the Tahoe’s roof panel and the longer Suburban roof panel, or changing from door outer panels to the lift gate panel can be made in a matter of minutes, compared with the hours it can take in other facilities. Enormous overhead cranes move the dies, which can weigh up to 60,000 pounds each, in and out of place. Up to five die sets are used for each body panel.

A five-step robotic process is used to form the panels and

pierce necessary holes. As with the new body shop, a camera-based inspection system helps ensure dimensional accuracy and supports faster, more accurate parts tracking.

The flexibility of the stamping operations, particularly with the high-speed die changes, allows the plant to produce a greater number of components on-site, said Read.

After leaving the body shop, the bare body assemblies are sent through the upgraded paint shop, which benefited from a 600,000-square-foot addition. It employs many new procedures and revised processes, including:

- A new “thin film” pretreatment process is used to prep the steel and aluminum bodywork to accept paint. It’s a more environmentally-friendly process than the previous method, which used more caustic material to etch the metal.
- After the thin film process, the bodies are rinsed before being immersed in another tank for electro-deposition coating, commonly called Elpo or E-dip, which helps seal the metal for corrosion protection.
- The bodies move next to the underbody sealing station, which uses robots to precisely and consistently apply liquid material to the seams and body-panel overlaps on the bottom of the body assembly. This new procedure is designed to enhance corrosion resistance.
- A more environmentally-friendly waterborne top-coat system replaces the solvent-based materials previously used in the paint shop. It also requires less time and less material than solvent-based paints.
- Vision-system cameras are used to verify various color and paint finish-quality characteristics.

The new and revised features within the paint shop complement additional improvements made in recent years; and because the front fenders and hood are now painted in line with the rest of the body, the integrated front-end assembly has a smoother overall appearance, said Read. The 2021 Chevrolet Tahoe and Suburban will go on sale in mid-2020.



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GM Arlington employees use new equipment to make Tahoes.

Ford Locations in Michigan Getting Major Investments

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

synergies with the company’s existing AV research functions in Dearborn and Detroit. At that same location, Bronco and Ranger will be modified for customers, Felker said.

At Ford’s Dearborn manufacturing site, Ford will add 300 jobs and invest about \$700 million to support production of new electrified variants of its F-150 truck, producing both a hybrid and fully electric F-150. Ford will also create a new operation in Dearborn where battery cells will be made into a battery pack for the F-150 hybrid and EV F-150.

“At Ford, we are investing aggressively in building on our strengths today – including trucks and SUVs – while at the same time expanding our leadership into electric and autonomous vehicles,” said Joe Hinrichs, Ford’s president, Automotive. “As America’s No. 1 producer of automobiles, we are proud of our commitment to invest in manufacturing here in Michigan.”

The company’s investments are supported by Ford’s strong partnership with the UAW, as well as with federal, state, county and local governments, Hinrichs said.

“The UAW is proud of Ford’s commitment to manufacturing in the United States and in Michigan,” said UAW President Rory Gamble. “This is a direct result of the 2019 collective bargaining process, providing additional jobs – and job security – for UAW members in Southeast Michigan.”

In the 2019 UAW-Ford contract, Ford pledged to invest \$6 billion in its U.S. factories, creating or

retaining 8,500 jobs. Ford is proud to be America’s No. 1 producer of vehicles and the largest employer of UAW-represented autoworkers, Hinrichs said. The new 2020 F-150, F-150 hybrid and all-electric F-150 are meant to expand Ford’s truck leadership.

In 2020, Ford will debut the all-new F-150 and F-150 hybrid. The fully electric Ford F-150 is coming soon after and will be part of the company’s more than \$11.5 billion global electrified vehicle investment. Dearborn Truck Plant will build these Ford F-150s, part of the Ford F-Series, America’s best-selling truck for 42 straight years.

The Ford Bronco will be revealed in the spring of 2020. This new off-road SUV will be built alongside the Ford Ranger at Ford’s Michigan Assembly Plant, Hinrichs said.

“As one of Ford’s icons, Bronco represents where the company is expanding and where it’s playing to win,” Hinrichs said.

Downtown Gets New Business

DETROIT (AP) – A global business and civic consulting company is expected to open a new office in Midtown Detroit.

The Boston Consulting Group will move into a nearly 30,000-square-foot space in a \$70 million building that currently is under construction and expected to open in spring 2021, according to Olympia Development.

The site puts Boston Consulting in “strategic proximity to the growing base of talent and opportunities throughout the city,” said Keith Bradford, Olympia Development senior v.p.

FCA-Peugeot Merger Proceeding

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for stakeholders. More than two-thirds of run rate volumes will be concentrated on 2 platforms, with approximately 3 million cars per year on each of the small platform and the compact/mid-size platform.

The FCA media statement said that these technology, product and platform-related savings are expected to account for approximately 40 percent of the total €3.7 billion in annual run-rate synergies, while purchasing – benefiting principally from scale and best price alignment – will represent a further estimated 40 percent of the synergies. Other areas, including marketing, IT, G&A and logistics, will account for the remaining 20 percent.

These synergy estimates are not based on any plant closures resulting from the transaction. It is projected that the estimated synergies will be net cash flow positive from year 1 and that approximately 80 percent of the synergies will be achieved by year 4. The total one-time cost of achieving the synergies is estimated at €2.8 billion.

Those synergies will enable the combined business to invest significantly in the technologies and services that will shape mobility in the future while meeting the challenging global CO2 regulatory requirements. With an already strong global R&D footprint, the combined entity will have a robust platform to foster innovation and further drive development of transformational capabilities in new energy vehicles, sustainable mobility, autonomous driving and connectivity.

The merged entity will benefit from an efficient governance structure designed to promote

effective performance, with a Board comprised of 11 members, the majority of whom will be independent. Five Board members will be nominated by FCA and its reference shareholder (including John Elkann as chairman) and five will be nominated by Groupe PSA and its reference shareholders (including the senior non-executive director and the vice chairman). At closing, the Board will include two members representing FCA and Groupe PSA employees.

Carlos Tavares will be chief executive officer for an initial term of five years and will also be a member of the Board.

The new group’s Dutch-domiciled parent company will be listed on Euronext (Paris), the Borsa Italiana (Milan) and the New York Stock Exchange and will benefit from its strong presence in France, Italy and the U.S.

Under the proposed by-laws of the combined company, no shareholder would have the power to exercise more than 30 percent of the votes cast at shareholders’ meetings. It is also foreseen that there will be no carry-over of existing double voting rights but that new double voting rights will accrue after a three-year holding period after completion of the merger.

EXOR, Bpifrance, the Peugeot Family and Dongfeng have each irrevocably committed to vote in favor of the transaction at the shareholders’ meetings of FCA and Groupe PSA.

Before closing, FCA will distrib-

ute to its shareholders a special dividend of €5.5 billion while Groupe PSA will distribute to its shareholders its 46 percent stake in Faurecia. In addition, FCA will continue work on the separation of its holding in Comau, which will be separated promptly following closing, for the benefit of the shareholders of the combined company.

In a press release, the merged companies stated that “this will enable the combined group’s shareholders to equally share in the synergies and benefits that will flow from a merger while recognizing the significant value of both Groupe PSA and FCA’s assets and strengths in terms of market share and brand potential.”

“Each company intends to distribute a €1.1 billion ordinary dividend in 2020 related to fiscal year 2019, subject to approval by each company’s Board of Directors and shareholders. At closing, Groupe PSA shareholders will receive 1.742 shares of the new combined company for each share of Groupe PSA, while FCA shareholders will have 1 share of the new combined company for each share of FCA.

“Completion of the proposed combination is expected to take place in 12-15 months, subject to customary closing conditions, including approval by both companies’ shareholders at their respective Extraordinary General Meetings and the satisfaction of antitrust and other regulatory requirements.”

GM Invests in Truck Facility

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

shop, body shop and general assembly areas will receive upgrades, including new machines, conveyors, controls and tooling, Flores said.

“Through this investment, General Motors is making a firm commitment to the State of Missouri, the City of Wentzville and the GM Wentzville team,” said GM President Mark Reuss. “This is part of our comprehensive strategy to invest in growth areas and strengthen our U.S. manufacturing base. GM sells more pickups than any other automaker and we have aggressive plans to build on our strengths.”

Since reintroducing the Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon in 2013, GM has sold more than 700,000 midsize pickups in the U.S. The Colorado and Canyon have helped cement GM as the U.S. industry’s most successful pickup truck company for four consecutive years, said Flores. From 2013 through Q3

2019, he said GM has sold 600,000 more pickups than any other competitor in the United States.

GM has invested heavily in midsize trucks in recent years by bringing more product features to market, including new diesel and gas engines, new transmissions and special edition models, like the Chevrolet Colorado ZR2 and Bison, as well as the GMC Canyon AT4 available next year, Reuss said.

Among the GM executives who attended the Dec. 13 announcement at the Wentzville plant was Gerald Johnson, GM executive vice president of Global Manufacturing.

GM’s Wentzville assembly plant opened in 1983. The plant builds the Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon midsize pickups and Chevrolet Express and GMC Savana full-size vans, operating on three shifts of production. It currently employs about 4,000 hourly and 330 salaried employees.

FCA Funds Detroit Housing Program

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

occupied homes in the neighborhood surrounding FCA’s new assembly plant will have the opportunity to apply to receive a home repair grant this spring. Details on this process will be made available through the HRD program.

“One of the most important ways to keep our neighborhoods healthy is to preserve our existing housing stock. Unfortunately, many necessary repairs, such as roof replacement and furnaces, are cost prohibitive for residents,” Nicole Wyse, associate director, HRD said. “The FCA-funded program will enable homeowners to address these repair issues – that otherwise would have been prolonged – and continue to live comfortably in their homes.”

Following weeks of public meetings with residents in the neighborhoods around areas where the Mack plant is current-

ly taking place, FCA and the city of Detroit committed to a Community Benefits Agreement, which provides more than \$35 million in support for neighborhood improvements, housing, workforce development, education and training programs, and environmental initiatives, Frazier said.

This commitment is above and beyond FCA’s \$2.5 billion investment in the new assembly plant and creation of 4,950 new jobs, which will support production of a new three-row, full-size Jeep SUV and next-generation Jeep Grand Cherokee, as well as plug-in hybrid versions with the flexibility to build fully battery-electric models in the future.

The new assembly plant will be next to FCA’s Mack Engine Plant and Jefferson Assembly Plant.

Auto manufacturing has been taking place in the neighborhood for more than a century, Frazier said.

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Ford to Offer Shelby Owners Muscle Car Driving Lessons

It's one thing to have a car with a lot of horses under the hood. But once you have that, how do you safely take advantage of all that power? Simply go back to school.

Ford and Ford Performance Racing School are joining forces to offer a complimentary program exclusively for owners of the new Shelby GT500, said Ford spokesman Matt Leaver.

GT500 Track Attack, the latest in a long line of similar owner programs offered by Ford Performance, will be the first one introduced at the new Ford Performance Racing School location, Charlotte Motor Speedway in Concord, N.C.

Much like sibling owner programs put on by the school, owners are given a unique opportunity to learn firsthand the capabilities of their cars with professional training from instructors, Leaver said. Training will happen in the classroom as well as on one of America's best road courses and its first four-wide drag strip.

Owners of the new Shelby GT500 will be immersed into the performance and handling characteristics of their new cars in a controlled environment. Extensive course time teaches cornering, braking and launch techniques with a focus on the dynamics of the Shelby GT500, including its drive modes and launch control feature. Owners, said Leaver, will have fun learning all about the performance attributes of this thrilling car and have the opportunity to improve their driving skills.

“With its supercar-level powertrain, the all-new Shelby GT500 takes Mustang to a performance level once reserved only for ex-

otics," said Dave Pericak, Ford director of enterprise product line management.

"We've set a new standard among American performance cars with our most powerful street-legal V8 to date, plus the quickest-shifting transmission ever in a Mustang for all-out precision and speed. GT500 Track Attack is absolutely essential in helping owners understand how to get the most out of their cars. This promises to be an exciting experience - one that owners will never forget."

Ford Performance Racing School will provide Shelby GT500s for participants to use in all exercises. An optional second day of on-track instruction will be conducted in Ford Mustang GTs equipped with upgraded Ford Performance suspensions and brakes.

"We are looking forward to the first season of GT500 Track Attack, especially as this will be among the first programs conducted at our new facility in Concord," said Dan McKeever, Ford Performance Racing School president. "Shelby GT500 is an exceptional car and delivers an exhilarating driving experience. Our school is the perfect venue to demonstrate just what it can do, both on the track and on the strip. Our professional instructors can help anyone take their driving expertise to the next level, whether they are beginners or experienced drivers."

Expord will cover costs of the driving school in its entirety, while owners will be responsible for travel, hotel and optional-day Mustang GT program costs. While not yet finalized, options for owners to bring guests are being considered, Felker said.



FCA kept a holiday tradition going when it placed a tree on an under-construction building at its Mack site.

FCA Raises a 'Construction Tree' at Mack

FCA wasn't going to let a little thing like a building being uncompleted get in the way of a holiday tradition.

FCA raised a Christmas tree to "top off" the new paint shop being built as part of a \$1.6 billion investment to construct a new assembly plant on Detroit's east-side.

While most recognize the evergreen tree as a classic symbol of the holiday season, for the ironworkers who spent the past four months assembling 6,500 tons of structural steel, it means something very different, said FCA spokeswoman Jodi Tinson.

A long-standing tradition, the raising of a Christmas tree – or construction tree, as it is also

known – marks the placement of the highest beam or structural element of a building. It also symbolizes that the construction milestone was reached safely, without serious injury, Tinson said.

"In ancient times, the tree was an announcement to the community to come and celebrate the completion of the new building, a tradition that is continued today," said Joseph Panyard, FCA project manager for the new Detroit paint shop.

"The last piece of steel for our

project was painted white and signed by all of the ironworkers who have worked tirelessly on this project."

In February of 2019, FCA announced plans to make investments to build the first new assembly plant in Detroit in nearly 30 years, bringing 3,850 new jobs to the city.

The new Mack assembly plant will produce the next-generation Jeep Grand Cherokee and the new, three-row, full-size Jeep SUV, along with their electrified models.

Toyota Shows Off Robots

TOKYO (AP) – Toyota Motor Corp. has unveiled an upgraded version of its human-shaped T-HR3 robot. The robot, which is controlled remotely by a person wearing a headset and wiring on his or her arms and hands, now has faster and smoother finger movements because the controlling device is lighter and easier to use.

Such a robot could, in the future, be used to perform surgery in a distant place where a doctor cannot travel. It also might allow people to feel like they're participating in events they can't actually attend.

In a recent demonstration in Tokyo, a person wearing a headset and wiring made the robot

move in exactly the same way he was moving, waving or making dance-like movements.

Smaller robots that look like the mascots for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics were controlled in the same way.

Toyota engineer Tomohisa Moridaira said human-shaped robots can be controlled intuitively because all the person operating it has to do is move naturally.

The challenge still lies in securing reliable and speedy telecommunications connections so that signals are accurately relayed from the human to the robot, said Moridaira.

The robots were connected by local networks in the demonstrations.

Road Rage Incident Ends in Shooting

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Police in Tennessee say they are looking for a driver accused of shooting another motorist in what appears to be an “extreme case of road rage.”

The shooting occurred around 5 p.m. Dec. 12 on Interstate 24, Nashville police said in a statement, according to news outlets.

The shooting victim told police investigating the incident that he was merging onto I-24

East from I-440 in heavy traffic when another motorist repeatedly tried to cut in front of him, flipped him off and began shooting, the statement said.

The victim was hit in the back and leg and was taken to a hospital in serious condition but is expected to recover.

Police say the victim told officers the shooter appeared to be a woman and was driving a black four-door Audi.



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GM Customer Care Program Builds Loyalty

Helping GM drivers get access to the parts they need to keep their GM vehicles in top shape is just one way General Motors is building customer loyalty.

“General Motors Customer Care and Aftersales has reached milestone growth, as well as a new enhancement to my GM Partner Perks,” said Kris Mayer, GM CCA’s general director of retail and wholesale dealer channels.

“GM continues to build strong and robust programs to support business partners and customers.”

Launched earlier this year, my GM Partner Perks provides enrolled repair facilities and collision shops with a comprehensive parts loyalty program, rewarding on purchases of GM Genuine Parts, ACDelco, Chevrolet Performance and GM Accessories.

“My GM Partner Perks makes it easier for dealers, direct accounts and our independent aftermarket partners to conduct business with us,” said Mayer. “Since its launch, my GM Partner Perks has paid out \$3 million in

rewards to more than 6,500 members.”

Starting Jan. 1, 2020, my GM Partner Perks members will be able to participate in a streamlined process for quarterly trade rebates through the my GM Partner Perks portal with just a few clicks, Mayer said. This includes reviewing and approving parts purchase history. Additionally, GM continues to concentrate on major industry trends.

According to IHS Markit, the number of light vehicles in operation in the U.S. reached a record high earlier this year, with more than 278 million vehicles on the road.

This, combined with the aging vehicle population, provides great opportunities to increase sales in the parts and service industry.

“GM CCA has been on a journey to strengthen our overall parts offerings and we are continuing to deliver for our business partners and customers as industry trends evolve,” said Mark Drennan, general director of GM CCA’s ACDelco channel.

“As we prepare for future growth opportunities, we are investing heavily in our program and product offerings.”

GM CCA also continues to identify, invest and introduce new GM Genuine Parts and ACDelco parts to the market, and further develop promotions that help GM business partners increase their parts sales, Drennan said.

“We want to make sure our customers have the products they need, when they need them, to ensure efficient service and repairs,” said David Mestdagh, GM CCA’s general director of global product management. “GM is dedicated to launching innovative original equipment and aftermarket products that join a breadth of parts offerings, from maintenance and repair to collision, propulsion and performance.”

GM CCA is on the path to further strengthen its original equipment parts brands and to help members leverage the benefits of using GM original equipment parts, Mayer said.

Microsoft, Ericsson Connect Cars to Cloud

International technology companies Ericsson and Microsoft are bringing their connected vehicle expertise together.

Ericsson is building its Connected Vehicle Cloud on top of the Microsoft Connected Vehicle Platform that is running on the Microsoft Azure cloud platform.

The integrated solution allows automakers to deploy and scale global vehicle services such as fleet management, over-the-air software updates and connected safety services much easier and faster while reducing costs, said Peggy Johnson, executive vice president of Business Development at Microsoft. It provides flexibility through modular design and multiple deployment options.

Ericsson’s Connected Vehicle Cloud connects more than 4 million vehicles across 180 countries worldwide – approximately 10 percent of the connected vehicle market, Johnson said. The platform is tailored to fit vehicle manufacturers’ growing demand for scalability and flexibility with the capability of supporting any connected vehicle service.

Ericsson’s Connected Vehicle Cloud offloads vehicle manufacturers’ complexity of global 24/7 operations and lifecycle manage-

ment related to connected vehicles with a guaranteed service-level agreement.

The Microsoft Connected Vehicle Platform (MCVP) empowers automotive companies to accelerate the delivery of safe, comfortable and personalized connected driving experiences, Johnson said.

It combines cloud infrastructure, edge technology as well as AI and IoT services with a diverse partner ecosystem. With MCVP, Microsoft offers a consistent, cloud-connected platform across all digital scenarios on top of which customer-facing solutions can be built, including in-vehicle infotainment, advanced navigation, autonomous driving, telematics and prediction services, and over-the-air updates. MCVP includes the hyperscale, global availability, and regulatory compliance that comes with Microsoft Azure.

“The Ericsson and Microsoft partnership will deliver a comprehensive connected vehicle platform at scale to the market,” said Åsa Tamsons, senior vice president and head of Business Area Technologies & New Businesses at Ericsson.

“Our integrated solutions will help automotive manufacturers

accelerate their global connected vehicle solutions and offer a better experience for drivers and passengers,” said Tamsons. “This is an exciting new offering with great benefits for the automotive industry, leveraging Ericsson and Microsoft’s technology leadership in connectivity and cloud.”

“Together with Ericsson, we intend to simplify the development of connected vehicle services to help car makers focus on their customers’ needs and accelerate the delivery of unique, tailor-made driving experiences,” Johnson said.

Jeep Plant Replacing Old DTE Facility

DETROIT (AP) – A Detroit power plant that was more than 100 years old was demolished Friday, Dec. 13, to accommodate the construction of a new Jeep assembly factory.

Explosives were used to bring down the Connors Creek plant near the Detroit River on the city’s east side.


The plant, which belonged to DTE Energy, started in 1915 as a coal-fired operation but was later converted to natural gas.

It was retired back in in the year 2008.

“Connors Creek Power Plant played an important role in the growth of Detroit and is an integral part of DTE’s history,” said Trevor Lauer, president of DTE Electric.

DTE is swapping land with the city of Detroit as part of the new deal. The old power plant property will be used to store Jeeps that will built nearby by Fiat Chrysler.

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