

Tesla Opens New EV Dealership in Paris

Electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla Motors will open its newest showroom Sept. 30 in the heart of Paris, just in time for the 2010 Paris Auto Show.

Tesla's 14th store worldwide, at 41 Avenue Kléber, is walking distance to the Arc de Triomphe and Champs Elysées, with a view of the Eiffel Tower.

The Paris showroom will serve Tesla owners throughout France, Belgium and the Netherlands – and offer test drives to prospective customers visiting the capital for work or pleasure.

"The Paris store provides an immediate, highly visible presence in one of Europe's most important cities," said George Blankenship, Tesla's vice president of Design and Store Development.

"We want to create stylish, inviting places to buy cars and learn about 21st century vehicle technology."

Blankenship, who joined Tesla earlier this year, is best known as the architect of Apple's brand-building retail strategy.

Blankenship and other executives will elaborate on Tesla's long-term retail plans



France is one of the top regional markets for the Tesla Roadster, shown here at Place de La Concorde in Paris.

at an Oct. 1 news conference at the Paris Motor Show, including its plans for retail stores in Tokyo and Washington, D.C.

Tesla says that it is revolutionizing automobile ownership – starting at the point of purchase. Unlike traditional car dealerships, Tesla stores are designed to be welcoming destinations where people can buy cars and learn about Tesla's industry-leading technology.

Tesla is also improving the ownership experience

through its mobile service technicians, who provide "house calls" and can perform annual inspections, software upgrades and other services at car owners' homes and offices. The unique program gives customers peace of mind and unparalleled convenience – whether or not they actually live near a Tesla dealership or not.

France, one of Tesla's top markets in Europe, has aggressively promoted renewable energy development,

particularly wind and solar power. The French government wants renewable energy to account for 20 percent of the country's total energy consumption by 2020.

Meanwhile, Tesla Roadster owners can park and recharge for free at hundreds of charging stations nationwide – one of the world's most extensive vehicle charging networks. But Roadster owners typically just plug their cars into conventional outlets. The Roadster comes with an extension cord that plugs into any outlet, similar to laptops or mobile phones. No special infrastructure is needed, Tesla claims.

The Roadster reportedly accelerates faster than other sports cars in its price class yet has zero tailpipe emissions.

Meanwhile, it consumes no petroleum and plugs into conventional sockets – at owners' homes or office parking lots, hotels, resorts and shopping malls.

The Roadster, which gets 340 kilometers (about 211 miles), is also the only sports car that can be fully or partially recharged by renewable energy.

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Nearly 500 Workers to be Recalled At Spring Hill to Build New Engine

By LUCAS L. JOHNSON II
Associated Press Writer

SPRING HILL, Tenn. (AP) – General Motors is bringing back hundreds of idled workers to build a new generation of four-cylinder engines at the Tennessee plant where the Saturn brand was launched two decades ago.

But GM North America President Mark Reuss said production of any new car at Spring Hill remains uncertain – much like the economy.

"As we rebuild the company, we have to feel comfortable about where the economy is and people have to have confidence in the economy and that will dictate how we reinvest," Reuss said.

About 480 workers will be recalled as GM plans to invest \$483 million to build the next generation of the company's Ecotec four-cylinder engine. The plant already builds three four-cylinder engines.

The automaker laid off about 2,000 workers at Spring Hill last year and about 800 of those workers have relocated to GM plants in other states.

About 1,000 retired, active and laid off workers gathered last week to hear from GM officials, Gov. Phil Bredesen and others. Also present were U.S. Sens. Bob Corker and Lamar Alexander and U.S. Reps. Marsha Blackburn and Lincoln Davis.

Bredesen sounded an optimistic note about the future.

"This is such a good plant," he said. "As the automotive market comes back, there's no question in my mind that this Spring Hill plant has a role to play in the future."

A handful of boos erupted from the workers when Corker showed up. They apparently were still upset over Corker's opposition to bailouts for



GM North American President Mark Reuss announced GM's \$483 million investment.

the auto industry and his push to get the United Auto Workers to agree to wage and benefit concessions.

"I do understand the reaction today but, on the other hand, I play a major role in the debate as it relates to the auto industry in this country and I know that debate has helped shape the auto industry and make it stronger," he said.

The company received a \$50 billion government bailout and so far has paid back \$6.7 billion and has a plan to start the process of selling stock to the public.

Mike Danford, 47, was laid off last year and lauded the worker recall.

"I'm like a little kid on Christmas," Danford said, adding that he is optimistic about a car line coming to the plant in the future. "I believe we will have a vehicle here in the next couple of years."

Spring Hill Mayor Michael Dinwiddie said he's just glad to see people going back to work.

"How awesome it's going to be for hundreds of people to say I have a job," he said.

Saab, American Axle form New Driveline Venture

American Axle and Manufacturing, a global Tier 1 supplier of driveline and drivetrain systems and related components for the automotive industry, announced it has formed a joint venture with Saab.

The new company, e-AAM Driveline Systems will engineer, develop and commercialize electric all-wheel drive (e-AWD) and hybrid driveline systems for passenger cars and crossover vehicles. e-AAM systems will be designed to improve fuel efficiency, reduce CO2 emissions and provide all-wheel-drive (e-AWD) and hybrid driveline systems for passenger cars and crossover vehicles.

e-AAM will leverage existing Saab and AAM technology, engineering facilities, laborato-

ries and testing equipment to expedite development time while minimizing cost. e-AAM will develop and market and innovative electric all-wheel drive system in a full-service package. The electric all-wheel drive system can be easily integrated into existing platforms, minimizing vehicle architecture changes.

e-AAM's technology has received strong interest in the marketplace. e-AAM systems will be featured in the next generation of Saab vehicles beginning 2012. In addition, e-AAM will be showcasing its expertise and advanced products to other global OEMs.

"AAM is pleased to be launching this exciting new business opportunity with Saab," said AAM Co-Founder, Chairman and CEO Richard E.

Dauch.

"e-AAM will leverage the outstanding competencies of both our companies in the development of state-of-the-art electric and hybrid driveline systems needed by global OEMs to improve the fuel efficiency, ride and handling performance and overall capability of their products. The new and innovative products to be engineered by e-AAM, as well as the new customers to be served by this joint venture, solidly support AAM's strategic initiative to expand and diversify our business."

Saab CEO Jan Ake Jonsson said the announcement of the American Axle-Saab partnership is a major step towards a successful future as an independent company.

"Saab is currently class-

leading with its innovative Cross Wheel Drive system," Jonsson said.

"The new all-wheel-drive system will secure a leadership position in its next generation Saabs. This joint venture will bring together Saab's world-class vehicle engineering expertise and AAM's extensive engineering, production and market capabilities, which leads to a powerful combination."

Saab, of course, was earlier caught up in the GM bankruptcy crisis of 2009 and was one of the GM brands that was eventually sold off to new European-based ownership.

Saab Cars North America is headquartered in Royal Oak, following the brand's exit from the Renaissance Center after it separated from GM.

Chrysler Museum Brings Back Favorite Retirees

The Chrysler Museum's recent "Under the Hood" event was a gold mine of Chrysler 20th century car history for area car buffs.

Hundreds visited the Museum in Auburn Hills to listen to a half dozen or more retired Chrysler engineers and program managers – the people who had a hand in creating some of the automaker's most iconic vehicles including everything from the Road Runner to the 1963 Turbine Car.

Brant Rosenbusch, manager of the historical group at Chrysler and curator at the Museum, set the scene for the occasion.

"We'll have the guys introduce themselves, talk for a minute, and then go out on to the floor with the vehicles that are associated with them," Rosenbusch said.

"Something a little more casual, a little more free flow, a little more fun, we hope."

"I just want to express our gratitude to these guys – we wouldn't be where we're at as a museum, and as a company, without the gentlemen you're going to meet today."

"These are the people that the authors go to talk to, they're the experts, they were living the history when it was going on around them."

Chrysler retirees returning to talk about their pet car program included Bert Bouwkamp, retired Director of Body Engineering and the man who helped develop the 1978 Chrysler Horizon, which won European Car of the Year in February of 1979.

When Chrysler's North American management team saw the car, they decided to build it in the U.S., where it won Motor Trend Car of the Year honors. Over the next 10 years, more than 3 million Horizon / Omni's were built worldwide.

Also speaking was Bruce Thomas, retired Chief Engineer, LX Program. Over time, he was Chief Engineer for the Chrysler 300, Dodge Charger, Dodge Magnum, Dodge Challenger and he retired at the end of 2007 after launching those vehicles.

porate historian, now 84, was on hand. He said his most notable product accomplishment was as chief engineer overseeing the development of the first minivan.

Thomas was also Chief Engineer of Chrysler Australia.

Then there was Jack Smith, who retired while known as the "father of the Road Runner."

"The whole Road Runner effort was crammed into the final weeks of the 1968 model year pre-production program when, to protect the launch, no changes were allowed unless critically required for impeccable reasons," Smith said.

Then there was Jeff Godshall, retired Senior Design Manager and the guy who is the keeper of all the great post-war Chrysler design stories of interest.

"I spent 45 years in Chrysler Styling / Design, joining Chrysler in 1963 and retiring at the end of 2007," Godshall said.

"I led the design team that did the interior of the 2001 PT Cruiser and the re-do of the Cruiser's interior in 2006."

"I was in the Dodge Exterior Studio circa 1964-1970 where I

worked on such cars as the Coronet Super Bee, Coronet and Charger R/T models."

Bill Carry spoke about the history of the 1963 Chrysler Turbine car, Marv Raguse about Vehicle Build Operations and Larry Shepard about Mopar performance.

Museum Curator Rosenbusch was pleased with this power-packed lineup of living Chrysler engineering and design folk.

"What we have here, what we have in storage, what we use all the time, it's a very ac-

tive collection," he said.

"It's not a monetary value: it's our soul, it's our heritage, it's the DNA of what we are today."

Car buffs, particularly those of the Road Runner and of the 1963 Chrysler Turbine car, turned out in droves to collect autographs on 1960s-era advertisements and to otherwise collect the memories of the retirees who now constitute the so-called "institutional memory" of the Auburn Hills automaker. It was a keeper.



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Chrysler retiree Jack Smith, called the Father of the Road Runner, told stories about the muscle car's origins to a variety of visitors at the Chrysler Museum's "Under the Hood" event.



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Retired Chrysler historian Bruce Thomas, 84, was on hand at the Walter P. Chrysler Museum's "Under the Hood" event to discuss Chrysler's larger 20th century corporate history.