

Reporter Likes Handling of Transit Connect Electric

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It's a little van that's become quite popular with commercial vehicle fleets and now the Ford Transit Connect is available as an all-electric version called the Transit Connect Electric.

The electric version is the product of a collaboration between Ford, electric power-train producer Azure Dynamics and AM General.

At the early production launch of the Transit Connect Electric, I was offered the opportunity to test-drive the vehicle, driving around the perimeter of AM General, final assembly site of the vehicle.

The Transit Connect Electric, of course, offers the same interior experience for the driver as the Transit Connect – everything is in easy reach and the seats are very comfortable.

While it can be difficult to tell with hybrids and electric vehicles whether a vehicle is ready to be put in drive, the Transit Connect Electric had a little chime when turning the key

that indicates it's ready to go forward.

Moving the vehicle forward, it was a smooth, quiet ride. Handling was very easy and the electric motor provided quite a bit of pep. The electric motor is part of Azure Dynamics' Force Drive Electric powertrain system.

Driving the Transit Connect Electric, I thought back to the time when I test-drove Freightliner's medium-duty delivery van prototype demonstrated at the Hybrid Truck Users Forum in September. Comparing the vehicles, the Transit Connect Electric drove much more like a car, was easier to maneuver and appeared to have more torque, though it's a noticeably smaller vehicle than the Freightliner.

While Ford announced that its Transit Connect Electric vehicle can achieve up to 80 miles on a single charge, Ford's Transit Connect Electric Program Manager Brad Probert said range does decrease a little bit when the vehicle is loaded with cargo, but said that for a fleet customer, the typical mileage range is 29-40 miles a day.



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

The Ford Transit Connect Electric was available for a test drive at AM General in Livonia.

Ford's First Transit Connect Electric Commercial Vans Are Headed Out to Initial Customers

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electrification programs and engineering.

"A strong teamwork environment established by Azure and Ford was critical to delivering this vehicle."

To date, all initial units already have designated customers. Azure Dynamics' LEAD customer program includes seven companies that are taking delivery of their first units in 2010, with the remainder of their orders to be filled in 2011.

Also, the Michigan Economic Development Corp. (MEDC) provided incentive funding for Azure Dynamics to encourage selection of a Michigan-based partner for final assembly.

Azure, of course, chose AM General to produce the Transit Connect Electric at its new facility in Livonia – very near the Bill Brown Ford dealership, by coincidence.

AM General, a long-established contract vehicle assembler and services provider, is responsible for final upfit of the Transit Connect Electric.



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

A Ford Transit Connect EV van at AM General in Livonia. Its battery pack is below the van.

Finally, the Transit Connect Electric is the first such product in Ford's accelerated electrified vehicle plan, and will be followed by the Focus Electric passenger car in 2011, along with a plug-in hybrid electric and two next-generation lithium-ion hybrid vehicles in 2012.

Taylor Joins TRW Board

TRW Automotive Holdings Corp. last week announced the election of David S. Taylor to the Livonia-based auto supplier's Board of Directors.

The appointment is effective immediately and will increase the size of TRW's board to 10 members. Taylor joins as an independent director.

Meanwhile, Taylor currently serves as Group President, Group Home Care, for the Procter & Gamble Co., a position he has held since 2007.

This global business unit includes the product categories of dishwashing liquids and detergents, surface cleaners and air fresheners, with combined revenues in excess of \$6 billion and a market

presence in over 70 countries around the world.

In addition, Taylor is responsible for P&G's Professional Business Unit, which sells directly to large hotels, restaurants, airports, care homes, industrial facilities and retail chains.

With 2009 sales of \$11.6 billion, TRW Automotive ranks among the world's leading auto suppliers. The company and its subsidiaries operate in 26 countries and employ over 60,000 people worldwide.

TRW's major products include integrated vehicle control and driver assist systems, braking systems, occupant safety systems and much, much more.

Heenan Steps Down After 40 Years in Industry

WASHINGTON – The Steel Market Development Institute (SMDI) has announced that Steel Recycling Institute (SRI) President William M. (Bill) Heenan, Jr. is stepping down due to health reasons after a distinguished career in the steel industry, including 20 years with SRI and 19 years with United States Steel Corp.

SMDI also announced the appointment of Gregory L. Crawford as executive director of the SRI effective Dec. 1, 2010, succeeding Heenan Jr.

"Bill's service to the steel industry over the last four decades will have an impact at least that far into the future," Lawrence W. Kavanagh, president of the SMDI, said.

"Building SRI from the ground up and establishing steel as the world's most recycled material together are tremendous career accomplishments for one individual. However, Bill's contributions to the industry go beyond these successes. His tireless work has positioned our industry to meet the increasing global demand for sustainable materials. We appreciate all that Bill has accomplished during his career and we wish him all the best for the future."

In announcing Crawford's appointment, Kavanagh said: "Greg brings a broad range of technical and managerial expertise in both recycling and sustainability to his new position. This will be important, as the mission of the SRI broadens to include the exceptional life cycle performance of our material. We see this shift in focus as critical in helping the steel industry and its customers meet the changing needs of society and the marketplace."

As SRI's vice president of operations, Crawford worked with private-sector and local/federal government managers on steel recycling issues.

He has been active with the technical and marketing considerations for sustainability for many years. In 1990, he joined the original ASTM E50 Committee on Environmental Assessment. In August 1995, he participated in the first Big Sky, Mont. meeting of the then-fledgling U.S. Green Building Council.

Crawford is also the execu-

tive director of the Cool Metal Roofing Coalition and secretary for the California-based Cool Roof Rating Council. In addition, he is on the board of the Athena Institute and is a member of the California Association of Building Energy Consultants. He is immediate past chairman of the Sustainable Buildings Industry Council.

"I am excited about this new responsibility with its many challenging aspects," Crawford said.

"Fortunately, the SRI can draw upon its many steel partners, both domestically and worldwide, in its efforts to shape a more promising fu-

Will Hybrids Finally Overtake Gas?

BIRMINGHAM, England – Petrol-powered company cars could almost be obsolete in 10 years, according to a new study by Lex Autolease with 300 finance chiefs and company car drivers.

Two exclusive surveys, conducted for the UK's largest leasing company, reveal that early adopters of hybrid and electric vehicles could sound the death knell for petrol.

Less than 5% of both groups polled believe that petrol cars, once the staple choice of business drivers, will outsell other fuel types in a decade's time. In contrast, 8 out of 10 business drivers (78%) and two thirds of FDs (65%) are confident that hybrid or electric vehicles (EVs) will become the most popular company car choice.

Chris Chandler, principle consultant at Lex Autolease, says: "Diesel has already overtaken petrol as the fuel of choice in the fleet sector, which is renowned for being an early adopter of new vehicular technologies. But, clearly, there is an expectation that the move away from petrol will accelerate as hybrids and EVs now begin to attract greater market share.

"10 years is less than three company cars away for most business drivers, so these options are being looked at by finance chiefs and drivers with a greater degree of seriousness than many believed, even within the industry. Employees are readied for

change and the business benefits are becoming more and more apparent to financial stakeholders too."

Further findings from Lex Autolease's driver survey show that 87% would consider a diesel for their next company car, while just 28% would put a petrol option on their shortlist. However, exactly half of the drivers polled would also include a hybrid, in either petrol or diesel form, which suggests that the latest batch of hybrids have overcome many of the perceived barriers to entry.

Indeed, almost half (47%) of all drivers polled would like to road test either a hybrid or a fully electric vehicle, while almost two thirds (64%) of finance bosses believe that employees should be given the option to add these vehicles to their company car choice list.

"For the time being diesel is king, but we are witnessing a shift in the market dynamics with new developments coming to the fore with potentially significant benefits for both drivers and companies. FDs are often cautious by nature, so the optimism coming from the shop floor to the boardroom is encouraging to say the least," adds Chris Chandler.

Lex Autolease says that the early interest in EVs has already translated to the next stage: "We have a fleet of over 300,000 vehicles and many of our customers are looking to

emerging steel markets.

Meanwhile, the Steel Market Development Institute investor companies are:

- AK Steel Corporation
- ArcelorMittal Dofasco
- ArcelorMittal USA
- Nucor Corporation
- Severstal North America Inc.
- SSAB Americas
- United States Steel Corporation

• USS-POSCO Industries

Generally, the domestic steel industry says it's in better shape than most, if only because it went through in the 1990s the same shakeout that automotive went through in 2008 - 2009.

trial alternative fuelled vehicles, which is a sensible approach, and our consultancy team has never been busier with enquiries of this nature.

"In tandem, we are forging ever closer alliances with manufacturers and other parties in the supply chain to ensure that our customers are well informed and ahead of the game, irrespective of whether they are keen adopt now or in the future," concludes Chris Chandler.

The Lex Autolease surveys were conducted with 230 company drivers and 70 directors of finance.

In Europe, diesel is already as far as both fleet and commercial vehicles go, but in the U.S., perhaps hybrids can make inroads where diesel passenger cars have not. The U.S. is seen as key growth market for hybrids, EVs and plug-in vehicles for this very reason.

With over 100 years' combined experience in the fleet industry, Lex Autolease is the UK's leading fleet management and funding specialist, and currently own and manage around 1 in every 75 vehicles on UK roads. It has a long track record of winning industry and customer awards for its proposition and service.

Lex Autolease shares joint ownership of Fleet Synergy International with Athlon Car Lease International, an international alliance providing access to fleet management experts in more than 30 countries.

Cummins to Build Plant In Turkish Trade Zone

COLUMBUS, Ind. – Cummins Inc. last week announced that it will break ground in early 2011 on a multi-phased manufacturing site at the Aegean Free Trade Zone in Izmir, Turkey.

The Company plans to first build a filtration manufacturing plant and follow with a facility to produce alternators for its power generation business.

"Turkey is a well established manufacturing center, with many capable suppliers and a large and expanding customer base. Turkey also has a young, growing labor force that we expect to continue to be cost competitive for many years to come."

Cummins executives joined leaders with Turkey's Investment Support and Promotion Agency and elected officials in Istanbul today to announce the Company's decision.

Production is expected to begin at the 1 million square foot site in early 2012 and Cummins expects to employ 800 people in Turkey within five years. Cummins Filtration will open its production facility first, followed by Cummins Generator Technologies, which produces alternators.

Cummins is investing \$70 million in the facility and related production equipment, with 85 percent of the products made in Turkey to be exported to Cummins' customers across Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Cummins chose the site in Turkey after a thorough selection process that gave consideration to more than 20 locations in Northern Africa, Europe and Asia. The facility will complement similar Cummins production and logistics facilities in France, Belgium and the U.K.

"Turkey is literally at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Africa and this location will be in the middle of some of Cummins' strongest markets," said Joseph Saoud, President – Cummins Filtration.

"We have worked closely

with the Turkish Investment Support and Promotion Agency since early in the process and have been delighted with their support and enthusiasm for this project.

"Turkey is a well established manufacturing center, with many capable suppliers and a large and expanding customer base. Turkey also has a young, growing labor force that we expect to continue to be cost competitive for many years to come."

Cummins Inc., a global power leader, is a corporation of complementary business units that design, manufacture, distribute and service engines and related technologies, including fuel systems, controls, air handling, filtration, emission solutions and electrical power generation systems.

Headquartered in Columbus, Indiana, Cummins serves customers in approximately 190 countries and territories through a network of more than 500 company-owned and independent distributor locations and approximately 5,200 dealer locations. The Company reported net income attributable to Cummins Inc. of \$428 million on sales of \$10.8 billion in 2009.

Cummins is often held up in the supplier world as having a good business model to follow if only because its overseas and global sales are as robust as its domestic work.

Cummins provides diesel engines to large U.S. truck-makers such as Ram Truck, but it also has a variety of engine and related industrial operations in Europe and elsewhere.

Officials at Cummins have said that by diversifying as readily as it has, the business plan offers relative insulation from moody economies across several continents – although in 2008 -09 it got slammed like the rest of the industry did.

But still, building fresh in Turkey is a positive sign for this major Midwest auto supplier and employer.

Former Ford Man David Reuter Is Nissan's New Corporate VP

Nissan Americas announced last week that David P. Reuter has been named vice president, Corporate Communications, effective Jan. 1, 2011.

Most recently, Reuter was senior director, Nissan Americas, where he was responsible for ensuring alignment across the corporate, product and internal Communications functions throughout the Americas markets.

Reuter, 39, joined Nissan in May, 2010, as director, Corporate Communications from Bentley Motors, Inc., where he was head of PR and Communications for the premium British brand's largest market worldwide.

He brings an international portfolio of communications skills to his new assignment, which includes expatriate assignments in Tokyo, Japan, and Cologne, Germany.

Reuter's communications career began at Event Management Co. in 1994, when he worked as an account executive for a number of automotive clients including Michelin Tire and the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit.

In 1994, he joined Ford Motor Co. as a Communications assistant at Ford Division. For the next 12 years, Reuter progressed through a series of communications roles at Ford, each with increasing levels of responsibility across product and corporate communications functions.

"We are pleased to welcome David Reuter to his new role in leading the communications function across Nissan Americas," said Carlos Tavares, chairman, Nissan Americas.

"As Nissan continues to grow throughout the Americas, David will play a critical role in strengthening our communications capabilities and implementing an improved level of process, alignment and capability across the region."

Reuter holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Oakland University and resides in Brentwood, Tenn., with his wife and four children.

Said Reuter, "The Nissan and Infinity brands are each at pivotal moments in their history and it will be a great challenge to integrate our communications team, etc."

Car Accidents Cause Confusion

What would you do if you witnessed a car accident?

What are you required to do, for that matter?

According to findings from a recent consumer survey commissioned by State Farm, how people respond to some of the sticky situations that can surround an auto accident tend to vary greatly.

Among the 1,000 Americans (individuals who currently have auto insurance) surveyed, responses showed that there is confusion over what the appropriate response is when they're involved in an automobile accident, either as a witness or event participant.

Key findings from the Sate Farm survey include the following insights:

• Do I have to go through insurance? About half of Americans feel it is against

the law to refuse to report an accident to an insurance company, while four in 10 think it is legal to "not go through insurance."

• What constitutes a witness? Three-fourths of Americans say they are a witness to an accident if they are within 100 feet of the crash and two-thirds say being a witness means not being involved.

• Should I pull over? Some 83 percent of Americans say they are likely to stop if they witness an accident which didn't involve them or their vehicle.

These questions are complicated and often involve personal evaluations to real-world situations, says State Farm, but it also points up the need for greater public education about what a driver's state-by-state responsibility is in an accident.