

Jim Tetrault, Ford Vice President for North American Manufacturing, helped the Chicago Assembly Plant welcome production of the 2011 Explorer earlier this month.

Michigan Assembly Is Multi-Use Plant

by Stefanie Carano Staff Reporter Detroit Auto Scene

Retooled from a large SUV maker to a flexible small car manufacturing plant, Michigan Assembly in Wayne will be the first facility in the U.S. to produce gasoline, hybrid, plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles on one platform.

"It's a very modular approach enabled by the platform strategy at Ford. There's really no better time to be working on this technology, where you've got platforms you can apply this to . . . once we've designed the technology to go into one it makes it very fast and very easy to put that in the next vehicle, it's just a top hat as far as the powertrain is concerned," said Sherif Marakby, Ford global chief engineer.

Production on the 2012 Focus and Focus Electric will be joined by production of the Focus C-Max and other vehicles for the 2013 model year.

Launched in the European market in 2003. It's built on Ford's C-sized compact platform, yet marketed for the 'minivan family.'

Ford Vice President of Engineering Derrick Kuzak called it a whitespace vehicle that explores the crossover between the car and the minivan on the unique C-segment footprint.

"We think customers are going to love how C-Max combines technology, convenience and functionality into such a tidy overall footprint," Kuzak said.

Like the new Focus, the C-Max brings the idea of kinetic design to the North American market with a bold, body sculpture meant to express energy in motion.

Despite its compact platform, Kuzak said that the Focus C-Max is similar in size to the original minivans with a wheelbase of 109 inches and an overall length of 178 inches. The vehicle seats up to seven passengers.

He said it's a very efficient size with a price point that is well suited to meet the needs of young families looking for fuel-efficient alternatives to existing products in the marketplace - that it will carve out new market space for Ford, in other words. Also, other features include

sliding rear doors and an automatic lift gate.

"Our approach is first, always take it form a consumer standpoint and you've got young families that are out there that want the flexibility that a utility or minivan gives them but they don't necessarily want to be penalized on fuel economy or the size of the vehicle," said Mark Field, president of the Americas.

BorgWarner Acquires Haldex

Auburn Hills-based supplier BorgWarner announced last week that it has signed an agreement to acquire the Traction Systems Division of Haldex Group, a leading provider of innovative products for the global vehicle industry headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden.

"This acquisition supports our continuing strategy to be a global technology leader in providing powertrain solutions," said Tim Manganello,

chairman and CEO at Borg-Warner.

"With the acquisition of Haldex, BorgWarner added a strong and well-respected brand of all-wheel drive products that will compliment our current portfolio as well as our customer and geographic mix."

The purchase price is about \$205 million and represents less than one times estimated 2011 sales for the Traction Systems Division.

Chicago Ready for Explorer

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Ford Taurus and Lincoln MKS

Ford's \$400 million investment includes approximately \$180 million in manufacturing investments at the Chicago Assembly and nearby Chicago Stamping Plant and about \$220 million for launch and engineering costs. Ford also added 1,200 new jobs to staff a second production shift at Chicago Assembly and increase production at Chicago Stamping.

The company's investment at Chicago Assembly allowed for renovations to accommodate the all-new Explorer, which is wider and taller than the outgoing model. This meant Ford had to rework everything from vehicle carriers to the overhead clamshells that carry unfinished vehicles from one part of the line to another. Twenty new pieces of equipment, 175 electric tools and more than 70 rearranged workstations rounded out the enhancements.

All of these renovations were done without disrupting production of Taurus and MKS. In fact, in the 2010 J.D. Power and Associates Initial Quality Survey, which measures "Things Gone Wrong," Taurus ranked highest within its segment. Taurus also ranked highest in its segment in the 2010 J.D. Power and Associates APEAL Survey, which

Right." Both are important third-party measures of quality and customer satisfaction.

"No details were overlooked, because we are dedicontinues to deliver the best, highest-quality products possible, and competes on the international stage in an increasingly global auto industry," said Jan Allman, Chicago Assembly Plant manager.

Additionally, a "rough road" test track was revamped, featuring seven surfaces designed to help employees identify any squeaks and rattles on vehicles before they leave the plant.

An updated error-proofing system also was incorporated that will benefit all the products built at Chicago Assembly Plant.

The system uses technology to assist operators at various workstations in confirming proper vehicle assembly. A device resembling a key fob is used to ensure the plant's electrical tools have applied the proper amount of torque during assembly. If any equipment does not receive the proper torque, the line will stop.

With the assistance of this technology, the operator has the necessary information to make a decision about whether or not there is a concern. Any and all concerns are addressed before the vehicle is permitted to move to the

physical upgrades we've made at the plant to prepare for this important launch, we've taken work force training to a new cated to ensuring our plant level," Tetreault said. "We trained the work force with an emphasis on quality. Chicago Assembly has a record of delivering vehicles with consistently high quality and excellent customer satisfaction. We are doing everything we can to make this plant the most competitive in every meas-

> For Explorer, training sessions began midyear, and included both classroom and hands-on learning for new and existing employees. workers were trained on "static" vehicles, before being paired with an operator to ensure they were qualified to work on their own. A staggered shift also helped integrate new employees, and ensured the same level of quality on both shifts.

> Additionally, a standardization process adopted from Ford's Hermosillo (Mexico) Stamping and Assembly Plant assured that operators aren't considered certified until they have worked on 400 units consecutively without error. All workers had to achieve this milestone before they could work alone on the line.

A long time ago, Ford built the Explorer at its now-defunct plant near Atlanta, but today Explorer's future is

3 New Vehicles Set for Assembly Plant

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he said.

"And, building our processes around that has been an extraordinary exercise for Ford Motor Company manufacturing to undertake in the last couple of years, because we had to collect up all of our best practices and standardize around what was the best way for us to build the vehi-

"And then again, we had to work with our colleagues in development

make sure that we had a design that enabled that process to be standardized around the world. And then, the last task that we've got is the one we're undertaking right now - and that's to launch new vehicles.

Starting Jan. 3, about 3,000 workers will be transferred from the adjacent Wayne Assembly Plant, which stopped production earlier month, to the Michigan Assembly Plant.

Two shifts will run at Michigan Assembly, as it did at Wayne Assembly. Ford has not announced plans for Wayne Assembly, which is currently idle.

With the help of state tax credits, Ford has invested \$550 million to transform the Michigan Truck Plant into It will also have electric vehi-Michigan Assembly.

In addition to flexible manufacturing, the plant will feature solar-powered electricity to help power the plant along Focus Electric.



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

Greg Christensen, Ford's manufacturing engineering supervisor at Michigan Assembly.

with conventional electricity. cle charging stations available to recharge a new fleet of plug-in vehicles that the plant will be assembling led by the

Ford Expands Use of Rear-View **Cameras to Promote Car Safety**

gressive technology onslaught by completing the roll-out of its innovative Rear View Camera System that will be available on nearly all Ford and Lincoln models by the end of 2011.

"Ford is making new innovations such as the Rear View Camera System available to a wide range of customers in most of our vehicles to help them see better when reversing," said Jim Buczkowski, director of electrical and electronics systems engineering at Ford.

"Our research shows that visibility is one of the biggest customer concerns today, which is why we are the only company to offer a Rear View Camera System, Blind Spot Mirrors and the radar-based Blind Spot Information System with Cross Traffic system."

Ford's system uses an exterior camera embedded in the rear of the vehicle that sends images to a video display in the rearview mirror or the navigation system screen to By KEN THOMAS help enhance visibility directly behind the vehicle when the driver is in reverse. The rearview mirror system allows customers a choice in systems.

Ford's Rear View Camera System image is overlaid with lines that mark the width of the vehicle and are shown either on a rear-view mirror display or navigation system screen. The camera's low light capability, combined with the intensity of the vehicle's reverse lamps, helps illu-

minate the image even in dark parking areas.

DEARBORN - Ford Motor View Camera System is easi-Company will continue its ag- est to use because there are lines to mark the vehicle's size for easier parking in tight spots," Buczkowski said.

Ford's system will be offered on most of its full-size pickups, vans and crossovers - including the new 2011 Ford Explorer - with the added benefit of helping truck owners align and hitch trailers.

"The tendency with trucks is just to talk about the numbers, who has the most towing or the most payload," said Doug Scott, Ford's Pickup, SUV, and Commercial Vehicle Marketing Manager.

"We lead in both of those areas, but equally important is that we're making it easier to use that best in class capability. The Rear View Camera System makes hooking up to a trailer so much easier than it's ever been before, so trucks and SUVs are the ideal vehicles for this feature."

Auto Lobbyist To Step Down

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - One of the auto industry's top lobbyists is stepping down.

Dave McCurdy, a former Oklahoma congressman, is leaving the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, which represents General Motors, Toyota, Ford, Chrysler and other automakers. McCurdy has led the trade group since 2007.

The trade group said in a statement McCurdy would discuss his departure soon. OEMs credit him for his good "We believe Ford's Rear career work on their behalf.



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