



Ford Chairman Bill Ford, Jr. with the Focus Electric at its 2011 Detroit auto show debut.

Ford Eyes Success of Electric Focus

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – Ford Motor Co. said earlier this month that an electric version of its Ford Focus sedan will go on sale in North America by the end of this year.

Ford introduced the electric Focus at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas during the first week of January. The car is expected to go up to 100 miles (160 kilometers) on an electric charge.

The automaker says the Focus can be fully charged in three to four hours using a 240-volt outlet. That's half the time it takes to charge the Nissan Leaf, a competitor that went on sale last month.

Ford also said its fuel efficiency numbers will be competitive with the Leaf. Late last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimated the Leaf would get the equivalent of 106 miles per gallon in city driving and 92 miles per gallon on the highway. The EPA determined the figures by estimating it will cost \$561 per year in electricity to charge the car.

Ford Explorer Named 2011's 'Truck of Year' At Auto Show

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

driving dynamics, available convenience technology, towing capability up to 5,000 pounds and available Intelligent 4WD with the Terrain Management System.

Also, Ford says the standard 3.5L V6 engine enables a class-leading highway fuel economy, something that the larger SUVs of the 1990s were never able to achieve.

For that matter, for SUV buyers putting top priority on fuel economy, Explorer this year will offer that 2.0L EcoBoost I-4 that is anticipated to deliver even greater fuel efficiency.

Ford concludes that the all-new Explorer has been reinvented to better reflect 21st century customer needs, while honoring the fully capable heritage of previous Explorer models. It is built at Ford's Chicago Assembly plant and already is on sale at Ford dealerships across America.

Visitors to the Detroit auto show can see the 2011 Truck of the Year in the Ford pavilion at Cobo Center. There, the NA Truck of the Year sure shines bright these days.

Ford said the Focus will have a unique, Microsoft-designed powering feature that will charge the vehicle during off-peak hours, when utility rates are cheapest, to save on electric bills.

It also has a touchscreen with information such as the amount of charge left, the distance to the next charging station and the amount of gasoline saved.

Pricing wasn't announced. The Leaf starts at \$32,780, but it is eligible for a \$7,500 federal tax credit that drops the price to \$25,780.

The electric Focus will be Ford's first electric car on the market. It began selling an

electric version of the Transit Connect van last year.

The Chevrolet Volt, an electric car with a small gas engine that takes over if the charge runs out, is the only other electric car on sale in the U.S. right now, but other competitors are planning to introduce electrics soon.

In 2012, Toyota plans to begin selling an electric RAV4 crossover, Chrysler plans an electric Fiat 500 minicar and Honda will sell an electric version of the Fit subcompact.

Ford said it plans to introduce four other electric vehicles in North America and Europe over the next two years. The electric Focus will go on sale in Europe next year.

GM's Akerson Questions Possible Future Fuel Efficiency Requirements

By KEN THOMAS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) – General Motors CEO Dan Akerson said last week that future fuel efficiency requirements being discussed by the government are "pretty ambitious" and suggested that Congress should reconsider the standard every few years.

During a meeting with lawmakers last week, Akerson raised concerns about fuel efficiency requirements that are being discussed for the 2017-2025 model years. Government regulators have said the fleet of new vehicles may need to meet a standard somewhere from 47 miles per gallon to 62 mpg by 2025, nearly double the current rules.

The future requirements are still in an early planning phase by the Environmental Protection Agency and Transportation Department and would amount to a 6 percent annual increase if the target reached 62 mpg by 2025.

That target would far exceed the mileage of current models of the Toyota Prius hybrid, which gets about 50 mpg. Rules adopted last year will raise the new vehicle fleet average to 35.5 mpg by 2016, an increase of more than 40 percent over current standards.

"We have a stated goal of not fighting change but embracing and trying to achieve it as best we can. We're in pretty good shape through 2016," Akerson said. "You just have to remember that the laws of physics are not going to be suspended and to see 6

percent compounded annual improvement is a pretty ambitious target, so we need to work on that pretty diligently to make sure we're in good shape."

He suggested that Congress could seek ways to conduct a "benchmark check" on the standards every 2 to 3 years to see "how is the industry doing" with the requirements.

The rules cost the auto industry billions of dollars to implement, but the government has said consumers will save money on gas in the long run.

Akerson was meeting last week with members of Michigan's congressional delegation, giving GM's home state lawmakers a briefing on the company's future. Michigan's two senators and House members said the executive was upbeat about the company's future nearly two years after its government-led bankruptcy.

Sens. Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., said they also discussed ways of amending a \$7,500 tax credit for the purchase of electric vehicles. General Motors recently released the Chevrolet Volt, a rechargeable electric car that qualifies for the credit.

The credits have a cap of 200,000 vehicles per car company and the lawmakers suggested that Congress could look into ways for companies like GM to get a larger allotment of the credits since some companies have yet to produce any electric cars.

"We want to make sure that as they're bringing costs down, that the credit is in effect as long as it's needed un-

til there's enough of a market," Stabenow said.

Note also that federal CAFE standards stayed largely the same from their inception in 1975 up to about 2007, when CAFE standards received their first substantive overhaul in over 30 years. Automakers are worried that they are now shooting at what amounts to a moving target for cars and trucks to meet.

Ford's Brown Is Executive Of the Year

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

relationship with those suppliers moving forward following Mulally's arrival in 2006.

Mulally said the Ford supplier base has been included in the One Ford Plan operation every step of the way since that time, thanks to Brown's intercessions and efforts on the OEM's behalf.

Mulally added that he was now pleased that Ford is among the leaders in positive OEM-supplier relations and he credited Brown for advancing Ford's cause in that regard.

Brown became Group Vice president of Global Purchasing in 2008. He had been Senior Vice President for Global Purchasing since 2004.

Brown first joined Ford in 1999 from United Technologies Automotive, where he was vice president of Supply Management. Brown holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and Finance from American International College in Springfield, Mass.

Chrysler 300 'Automobile Greatness,' Says Francois

by Stefanie Carano
Staff Reporter
Detroit Auto Scene

Chrysler is celebrating its new image in the 2011 Chrysler 300, revealed at this year's North American International Auto Show.

A vehicle that Chrysler Brand CEO Olivier Francois called 'a pure American expression of automobile greatness,' the 2011 300 model is featuring a new design scheme, new architecture, a new interior, new powertrain and a new suspension, totaling an investment of more than \$1 billion.

"It's time for a car that makes a bold statement without saying a word," Francois said. "It's an investment designed to deliver the best."

The 2011 300 will feature the new Pentastar V6 engine, which is designed to deliver 292 horsepower and a fuel economy of 18 mpg in the city, 27 on the highway. Francois said it will have the most advanced all-wheel-drive system in its segment, adjusting to different weather and driving conditions.

He said it also has more safety features than any domestic rival with technology that includes blind spot and rear cross-path detection, forward collision warning, and adaptive cruise control, as well as front and rear park assist and adaptive headlights.

Ralph Gilles, senior vice president of design for Chrysler, said the company was determined to get the car right.

"When Sergio came around, we debated this car heavily. Where did it have to go? Because somewhere along the

way, this car became an icon," he said. "As designers, we had to consciously choose to go in a different direction, but yet still respect where we came from."

He said this involved evolving the grille, yet he said Mopar is going to continue the heritage Bentley grille for people who enjoy customizing the 300, which, he said, is what the vehicle is all about.

And, when it comes to overall styling, Gilles said the vehicle is much more windswept with modern details throughout.

"The headlights were inspired by the eyes of our nation's bird of prey – the eagle. The details were inspired by jewelry, it's like a tailored suit. The lines are just gorgeous – the windshield's been rigged back for aerodynamics. It

even has a laser-raised roof, so it gives a custom look.

"One of my favorite features is the way the bumper disappears into the back lid and leans forward almost like a custom sport mode . . . The car is a little lighter on its feet. We hunkered down the wheel arches on the tires. The wheel arches are even bolder, yet a little more reserved at the same time.

"Overall the design was meant to evolve, go somewhere a little more intelligent this time around, less of a caricature, still beautiful and hopefully something very timeless."

Chrysler also presented the 2011 200 sedan and the Town and Country minivan models at this year's show.

Francois said the Town and Country is a vehicle that "cra-

dles the consumer at every life cycle."

"We took the best minivan in the industry and made it better," Francois said.

"New exterior styling, brand new SUV-like interior, but more importantly, now with amazing driving dynamics and unmatched safety technologies."

The Town and Country will also feature the 3.6L V6 Pentastar engine with 280 horsepower and a safety package that Francois said no vehicle in its class offers.

Francois said the 200 is 'the spirit of Sterling Heights' and in describing the new vehicle, showed a commercial featuring children whose parents work at the Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP).

"There's a great deal of faith in this 200," Francois said.

Michelin Design Program Still Grows at Auto Show

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

judges from all over the automotive industry. Among the more than 20 organizations represented have been BMW Designworks, Chrysler, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Volvo, Mercedes-Benz, and Nissan. Newcomers for 2011 included Phil Zak, Hyundai Americas Technical Center; Franz von Holzhausen, Tesla; and Anne Asensio, Dassault Systemes.

(Asensio, by the way, was originally scheduled to be a presenting judge at the 2011 show at Cobo but illness kept her away. She is a former GM designer as well.)

Interest from the design community that the program serves to support and encourage is evident by a 50 percent increase in the number of participating jurors from the 2003 to the 2011 juries. Stewart Reed, Chair of the Transportation Design Department at Art Center College of Design, participated first as juror and then as jury chairman, and has been a part of every Michelin Challenge Design jury.

"Through Michelin Challenge Design, we obtain the foresight to address potential transportation challenges and can use our research and development to better prepare everyone for a greater, sustainable mobility future," said John Moloney, vice president of original equipment marketing, Michelin North and South America.

Michelin Challenge Design helps drive awareness of the growing importance of the role of design in vehicle development and the challenges that face the discipline.

In the first NAIAS display,

Michelin Challenge Design focused on work from iconic and inspirational Italian designers.

Then, the theme paid homage to Michelin's home in France, as participants were challenged with creating design concepts that reflected the unique character of French design.

Later, design challenges looked at a possible future for vehicles in China and the influence of German design. In 2009, participants expressed their vision of America's iconic vehicle design under the theme: Brave + Bold.

Transportation and industry solutions explored through Michelin Challenge Design have included solutions for alternative powertrains, vehicle-to-vehicle safety issues, fuel-efficient, smaller vehicles and the future of electrifying vehicles.

A strong history of inspiring themes led to the 2011 Michelin Challenge Design theme "Plus 10: The Best is Yet to Come."

For Michelin, the first 10 years of the Michelin Challenge Design program are just the beginning.

The theme for 2012 announced at NAIAS is "City 2046: Art, Life and Ingenuity." In honor of Michelin's tradition of innovation, 2046 was chosen because it is the 100th anniversary of the radial tire.

Generally speaking, design in the auto industry, particularly on car exteriors, was pronounced on the Cobo show floor with this trend perhaps reflecting renewed optimism for greater car sales around the world – but not quite as pronounced as how tailfins came to define the post-war 1950s.



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

Chrysler Brand President and CEO Olivier Francois addresses the media at the Chrysler press conference, where he re-introduced the 300 sedan as the automaker's proverbial comeback car.