



Artist's rendering of what the Washington Ave. entrance to Cobo will look like after major pending renovations. The view is from further down Jefferson Ave. between the Renaissance Center and what the new Cobo will look like following reconstruction.

## DADA Excited with New Changes at Cobo

by Gerald Scott  
Editor  
U.S. Auto Scene

What the Wintergarden did to brighten the RenCen, new construction and major renovations also figure to have the same effect on Cobo Center.

About \$300 million in current and pending renovations were announced in a major press conference in the Riverview ballroom of Cobo on the riverfront last week and the Detroit Auto Dealers Association (DADA) said they were thrilled with the plans.

This is notable because DADA sponsors the annual North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) at Cobo Center every year and we remember the noises made just a few years ago about possibly moving it to another town if something wasn't done about aging Cobo Center.

Finally, something is being done about aging Cobo Center, thanks largely to the proactive stance of the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority (DRCFA), which now runs Cobo on a day-to-day basis.

Jim Seavitt, president of DADA and vice chair of the 2012 Detroit auto show, was at Cobo for the expansion announcement.

"I'd rather be here than Geneva (auto show)," Seavitt quipped before his formal remarks.

"The 25,000 square feet that are being put in place for next year's show are already sold out," he said.

"The neatest thing that's happened here is that you've

included the Detroit Dealers (in your discussions)... As a result of the Authority talking to us, you've been able to learn the things we need down here and the things our customers, the manufacturers, need.

"I'm real excited by what I saw here today. I know the other dealers will be extremely happy (with the news).

"You've listened, you've heard what we wanted and you did it."

That's quite an endorsement, considering that until the Authority took over operations of Cobo, it wasn't clear that NAIAS actually had a long-term future in Detroit.

Now, apparently, it does. That's all because DRCFA unveiled a three-year, \$221 million plan for the reinvention of Cobo Conference & Exhibition Center, metro Detroit's keynote regional convention facility.

The bond-financed project is actually Phase III of a multi-year strategic plan to return Cobo Center to its historic role as one of North America's premier meeting and convention venues.

Organizers said that the changes coming to Cobo are so profound that it will not only anchor the Detroit auto show for years to come, but should draw fresh convention business as well.

In creating its strategic plan, the DRCFA said it focused on restoring Cobo's competitiveness in the national meeting and convention landscape, revitalizing Cobo Center with an updated image and improving Cobo Center's

internal financial viability through increased revenue opportunities combined with decreased costs.

The most visible upgrades to Cobo Center announced last week include:

- The reinvention of Cobo Arena as a new, 40,000-square-foot ballroom with supporting meeting, pre-function and back-of-house spaces.

This new ballroom will feature a glass wall and open-air terrace facing Hart Plaza and downtown to the east, as well as pre-function space with a panoramic view of the Detroit River and the international border with Canada to the south.

- The creation of a new "signature space" for Cobo Center in the form of a spacious, three-story glass atrium that links the main floor of the venue with a new entrance facing the Detroit River, bringing the lower-level exhibition space more naturally into the flow of a meeting or convention - thus linking Cobo more fully to the Detroit riverfront on the facility's south wall.

- Significant renovation to the building's primary facade on the east side facing downtown Detroit (and the GM RenCen towers).

The primary element will be a high-tech "media mesh" that will function as a giant

digital signboard welcoming conventions and guests to Detroit and to the new Cobo Center.

- Reconfiguring of most meeting and display space. The majority of exterior walls along the river will be replaced by high-efficiency glass walls to take much better advantage of Cobo's riverfront location - opening Cobo up to the river in much the same way the Wintergarden did for the RenCen.

"We are making the changes to Cobo Center that our customers, stakeholders and competitive research have told us are necessary to return Cobo to an industry-leading status that will assist in attracting meetings and conventions to Metro Detroit," said Larry Alexander, chair of the DRCFA Board of Directors.

"We are not satisfied with 'good enough.'" The plan leapfrogs Cobo Center over competitive convention centers and gives Metro Detroit a cornerstone facility worthy of our region's proven ability to host world-class events."

Meanwhile, construction on the next major phase is scheduled to begin this July, with the overall schedule calling for renovation work to be done well into 2014. Many of the pending changes will be visible to attendees of the next Detroit auto show.

## Ford India Reports Large Sales Increase in Month

CHENNAI, India - Ford India nearly tripled sales in February, achieving a 188 percent increase from the same month last year, driven by continued strong sales of Figo. Ford sold a total of 9,293 vehicles this February compared to 3,223 in 2010.

The Figo, which celebrates its one-year anniversary this month, continued to draw customers to showrooms and has sold more than 76,000 units since its launch. It has a unique distinction of being the most awarded and one of the fastest selling cars in the history of the automotive industry in India.

"The phenomenal Figo has taken Ford to a new level in India," said Michael Boneham, president and managing director of Ford India. "Building on the Figo's success, we are delighted to soon be offering our customers the all new global Fiesta, a premium sedan to India as part of our ever-growing product portfolio."

"The stepped-up launch plan builds on the incredible consumer response to the Ford Figo, which in 12 months has transformed our presence in India and continues to attract many new customers to the Ford brand," added Boneham.

The new globally acclaimed Fiesta's arrival marks the first in a series of eight new global products that Ford plans to introduce in India by the middle of this decade. It will augment the current range of Fiesta vehicles in India, which remain an integral part of our product line-up.

In February 2011, the current Fiesta in India has been recognized as a leader in customer satisfaction in the mid-size segment according to the latest 2010 Total Customer

Satisfaction (TCS) study. Ford's other flagship product, the Figo was also named among the leaders in its respective category in this study.

This comprehensive study conducted by TNS specialist division - TNS Automotive, covers 56 models with customer evaluations in the key areas of sales satisfaction, product quality, vehicle performance and design, after sales service, brand image, and cost-of-ownership. The TCS index score provides a measure of Total Satisfaction and loyalty a given model enjoys with its customers.

To further strengthen its service support, Ford India has been expanding its sales and service network across the country. The company's dealer network has increased to more than 170 outlets in 100 cities across India.

Established in 1995, Ford India is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ford Motor Company, a global automotive industry leader. Ford India, which has close to 5,000 employees, manufactures and distributes automobiles and engines made at its modern integrated manufacturing facilities, at Maraimalai Nagar, near Chennai. The company's models include the Endeavour, Fiesta and the Figo.

Ford's operations in the country also include Global Business Services with a workforce of more than 4,700 employees, providing business services in the areas of IT, accounting and finance, financial services and automotive operations support, global analytics and engineering services. These operations serve Ford's business units and skill teams globally out of centres in Chennai and Coimbatore.

## Volvo to Invest \$10 Billion in Global Operations

By JOE McDONALD  
AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) - Volvo Cars said last week it will invest \$10-\$11 billion worldwide over the next five years in an ambitious expansion following its acquisition by a Chinese automaker.

CEO Stefan Jacoby's announcement came as Volvo unveiled plans to target fast-growing China for stronger sales. The company said it will open a production base in southwestern China and is looking at a possible second site in the northeast.

"We plan to invest \$10-\$11 billion over the next five years globally," Jacoby said in an interview. He said that will pay to develop a new vehicle platform and power train and to expand Volvo's presence in China.

Volvo was acquired in August from Ford Motor Co. by Geely Holding Group, one of China's small but ambitious automakers. The \$1.5 billion deal - China's biggest foreign auto acquisition - secured Geely a respected global brand but also the challenge of turning around a perennial money-loser in a distant country.

Volvo plans to raise part of the cash for its investment plans in China, drawing on its Geely ties, Jacoby said. He said the Goteborg, Sweden-based company also is raising money from European investment banks and the government of Belgium, where it has

a factory.

Jacoby, a German-born former president of Volkswagen Group of America, was appointed to lead management installed by Geely following the acquisition.

Volvo's China plans call for boosting sales to about 200,000 vehicles by 2015, up from 39,000 last year, Jacoby said. Worldwide, Volvo hopes to double sales to 800,000 by 2020.

"China plays a significant role in this growth plan," he said. "We have also significant growth plans in the United States and Europe and in very attractive overseas markets like Australia or Brazil."

China has become the centerpiece of global automakers' plans amid weak growth elsewhere.

It overtook the United States in 2009 as the biggest auto market by number of vehicles sold. And in 2010, total sales grew by an explosive 33 percent over the year before to 13.7 million vehicles, boosted by tax cuts and other incentives launched in response to the global crisis.

General Motors CEO Daniel Akerson this month called China the "crown jewel in the GM universe" and said his company will launch at least 20 new or redesigned cars here in coming years. GM, Toyota and other automakers are creating models to appeal to Chinese tastes.

"If Volvo wants to recover and wants more sales volume, China will definitely be a very

important part of that," said Boni Sa, an auto industry analyst for CSM Worldwide.

Volvo has the advantage that Chinese buyers see it as a premium brand on a par with Mercedes Benz or BMW, in contrast to its less luxurious image elsewhere, Sa said. But he said Volvo needs to meet rising Chinese expectations by adding accessories such as leather seats and sophisticated entertainment and air conditioning systems.

"If Volvo can build the right car for Chinese customers, they will see significant growth in China," Sa said. "They need to build more cars that can meet Chinese customers' demands."

Volvo and Geely make an unusual pairing - an established European brand better known for safety than style and a 14-year-old Chinese upstart maker of compact sedans and other low-cost vehicles that is barely known abroad.

Geely's strategy calls for making Volvo a "completely independent automaker" and giving Jacoby's team independence in decision-making, Geely chairman Li Shufu said Friday in an interview.

Li said Geely can help Volvo understand China's booming auto market but will keep the brand separate from its mass-market Geely Auto brand. Geely Auto sold about 495,000 vehicles last year.

"What Geely Holding Group can do is to do its best to help Volvo's development in China," Li said. "Volvo's manage-

ment decisions will be made completely by its own management team."

Volvo plans to create a production base in Chengdu in Sichuan province in the southwest. It said its China headquarters and design center will be in Shanghai. The company also is looking at a possible production site in Daqing in the northeast.

Jacoby said Volvo picked Chengdu in part because Geely has a factory there. Volkos currently are produced at a Ford joint venture in Chongqing, an hour's drive from Chengdu.

"We are planning to have our plant directly next door to the Geely plant so we can benefit from the infrastructure and shared services," he said. "That allows us to have a set-up in a very quick time."

Chinese news reports have suggested Chengdu was picked because the Sichuan government put up some of the money to finance the Volvo acquisition, but Jacoby denied that.

Volvo also wants to appeal to Chinese tastes but has no plans to design a model exclusively for China, Jacoby said. He said the company already has found Chinese buyers want more interior room.

"We are are looking very carefully for specific needs of the Chinese customers," he said. "By manufacturing here we have the opportunity to adapt our cars and tailor-make our cars for the needs of the Chinese customers."

## Former Ford Executive Publishes Hot New Book

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matter of time before Anne Doyle, who is no stranger to hot seats or hot topics, wrote her book. 'Powering Up' isn't just a roadmap for future women leaders. It's also a must-read for every man who is married to, works with or works for, high-achieving women. I couldn't put it down."

In a nice, life-comes-full-circle moment, Doyle invited current Detroit Pistons' play-by-play man George Blaha, to introduce her to the Inforum audience. It was Blaha who first hired Doyle as a broadcast journalist a long generation ago, back when women had no voice in that field - one that Doyle pioneered in Lansing and Detroit.

Writing in her tome, Doyle observed, "When I started my research, I was discouraged about women's progress. For all of our individual accomplishments, we seemed to be idling in place - stalled just below all of those impenetrable glass ceilings. But women are on the move again. This time, the wind is at our back."

"When Elena Kagan was sworn in on Aug. 7, 2010, as the 112th justice on the highest court in our land, it opened a new era in American justice: for the first time in U.S. history, three of nine justices - one third (remember, the 'tipping point') - on the Supreme Court are women. That's an unprecedented breakthrough."

Doyle dedicated the book to both her sister Mary, who committed suicide, and to her son Kevin, who's potential is still being realized.

She also included an introductory quote from famous American civil rights leader Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), as follows:

"The day will come when man will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the sexes that shall result in the highest development of the (hu-



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

**Former Ford executive Anne Doyle answers a question following her book talk to Inforum at the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn last week.**

man) race."

For any more of Doyle's developed wisdom about women and leadership here in modern business times, you'll just have to read the book.

## Ford System of Liquid Heating Aids Batteries' Performance

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explained Marakby.

"Basically, customers will have the capability they need right off the bat. They won't have to wait for the car to warm up."

On cold days, heated liquid warms the batteries, gradually bringing the system's temperature to a level that allows it to efficiently accept charge energy and provide enough discharge power to get good vehicle performance.

"Focus Electric wasn't built just for consumers in warm cities with consistent temperatures," said Marakby.

"We want our customers to know they can count on their electric vehicle whether they live in a cold or warm climate." Electrification is an important piece of Ford's overall product sustainability strategy, which includes five new electrified vehicles soon.

## AAA Salutes Clean Diesel as Innovative Technology

WASHINGTON, D.C. - New clean diesel engines, electric vehicles and hybrid cars were among the new innovations named last week by AAA on its biennial list of the top new vehicle technologies designed to increase performance, reduce environmental impacts and improve safety.

According to AAA's announcement, "While diesel engines have been around for decades, the days of smelly, noisy, smoke-belching and rough-running diesels are gone.

"Modern diesel engines are clean, quiet, refined and powerful. They are also economical, often providing a 30-percent boost in fuel economy with a corresponding decline in carbon dioxide emissions

compared to gasoline engines offering comparable performance."

Allan Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Diesel Technology Forum, a nonprofit association that represents diesel engine, vehicle and equipment manufacturers and fuel refiners, issued the following statement on AAA's proclamation:

"The automotive experts at AAA created an impressive list of new and innovative car technologies to honor in their biennial list. From new clean diesel technology to all-electric vehicles, AAA selections include a notable list of the latest innovations in automobiles."

Schaeffer added that the U.S. Auto market now pro-

vides "huge potential" for increased diesel auto sales.

While almost 50 percent of all new autos sold in Europe are diesel-powered, slightly more than 3.3 percent of U.S.

cars, light trucks and vans currently in operation are diesel powered, according to the most recent statistics made available to AAA by R.L. Polk and Co.

## Ford Improves SYNC Capabilities

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varying levels of technology. "Creating the mini Europe here in Detroit allowed us to do both simulated and real-world testing in a fairly short amount of time and still deliver a robust product," said Pleet.

Emergency Assistance will be the most advanced system of its type available, able to directly communicate with emergency services in double the

number of European emergencies as any other automotive emergency call services.

Just like its North American counterpart, Emergency Assistance can provide vehicle drivers and passengers with a connection to local emergency services in the event of an accident. The service is a subscription-free, no-additional-cost feature that uses a customer's existing mobile phone to make the direct connection to an emergency operator.