

Volt Continues to Draw Public from Leaf and Prius

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
GERALD SCOTT

The Chevy Volt and Nissan Leaf were launched into the U.S. marketplace at about the same time, back in December, 2010, and the cars are often compared and contrasted together.

In the first 9-10 months of sales, Leaf leads Volt approximately 6,000 units sold to 3,000 for Volt, but GM's Tony Posawatz is undaunted by that sales stat.

Part of the reason is that the GM Hamtramck Assembly Center retooled earlier this year, cutting into Volt production, but part of the reason is also that the Volt continues to fascinate and to generate what Posawatz and his team call the "Volt smile," the same smile almost everybody who test-drives it has on their face stepping out of the car.

Posawatz is Vehicle Line Director for the Chevrolet Volt. He was at the Freudenberg-NOK employee picnic recently in Plymouth, where GM had three Volts available for test drives compared with one from rivals Nissan Leaf and Toyota Prius.

The event gave Freudenberg employees the opportunity to test-drive the 2012 version of the Volt, which is already rolling off the line at the Hamtramck plant.

"The 2012 is very much like the '11, but the nice thing about the '12 is that the base price starts under \$40,000," Posawatz said. "So the great news about that is if you take that \$40,000 price, subtract the \$7,500 tax credit, plus the 2012 label tells us that the EPA says you save over 5 years another \$7,600 bucks (in fuel efficiencies), you are now sharing with customers the value proposition."

By now the Volt is a known quantity across Southeast Michigan, but Posawatz was buoyed to see that so many visitors were lined up to drive three Volt cars made available, compared with one Leaf at the ride-and-drive.

Toyota had the 2011 Prius and 2011 Camry on static display



WJR's Mitch Albom, right, broadcast live from the Freudenberg-NOK employee picnic last week in Plymouth. Here, he interviews Chevy Volt Vehicle Line Director Tony Posawatz about changes built into the 2012 version of the car.

play at the car show but did not participate in the ride-and-drive portion. "They were static displays and the Prius had people poring all over it during the event," Toyota communications manager Curt McAllister said.

Meanwhile, Posawatz is convinced that the Volt is on track to continue to be a very special flagship type of vehicle for GM, showing the type of high-tech, yet practical vehicle that the automaker can engineer when it puts its collective mind to it, so to speak.

"We have in the 2012 car, we have the passive entry system, so it allows your key fob to let you squeeze the handle and enter the car, but otherwise, the '12 is just as great as the 2011," Posawatz said.

There were no major exterior styling changes to the 2012 car, other than the fact that Chevy might open up the paint spectrum that buyers can choose for their Volts.

"At the beginning of 2012, we'll introduce a regular White, we currently have the Premium White Diamond that Cadillac people have loved for years, and then we introduce a very nice sporty blue that we're borrowing from Corvette and that will come shortly into the portfolio.

"So we'll have 8 different exterior colors along with a nice choice and mix of interior colors that includes the white, youthful center stack, and the much more rich gray, center stack and you can pick and choose. That's part of what the Volt's all about - giving customers choice."

Otherwise, Posawatz was pleased with the kickoff of the Volt and the important feedback that Chevrolet has received from the first generation of car buyer.

"The first customers were really a nice set of customers because they were really well educated, very astute, early adopters, they loved the car," said Posawatz.

"We've never seen the kind of feedback and scores positively on the car, but like all customers, they're more demanding and the nice thing is they gave us a bunch of ideas for future Volts... that will allow us to stay ahead of the competition."

Posawatz said Chevy is happy with the 1.4L engine, which draws 9.3 gallons of Premium gas as a supplement to mileage traveled on a full charge on the lithium-ion batteries.

"The nice thing about Premium that we continue to ref-



Debbie Madias, an executive assistant with Freudenberg-NOK emerges from a 2012 Chevy Volt. She loved the car. Freudenberg hosted an employee picnic featuring hybrid and EV ride-and-drives.

erence to people is the incremental amount you pay in Premium you actually save in increased efficiency when the engine is running," Posawatz said.

"It's really a high-tech machine and so we ask people to treat it as such - albeit the wonderful thing about the Volt is the maintenance costs are so low compared to a regular car - maybe every two years there's an oil change - the amount of wear on brakes is significantly less if you use your regen system and the like. We differ from other manufacturers in that there's no maintenance required on our battery. There's one flush of the coolant system mid-life, but no other maintenance required on the battery, which is a great proposition for customers."



A Chevy Volt recharges in the parking lot of Freudenberg-NOK. Charging stations no longer draw attention. In this picture, it does not appear to be generational.

New Chevrolet Malibu Ecotec 2.5L is More Powerful, Fuel-Efficient, Quieter

MILFORD, Mich. - Chevrolet recently revealed details of the all-new Ecotec 2.5L four-cylinder engine. More efficient, refined and powerful than its predecessor, the new powerplant will be the standard engine in the 2013 Malibu.

The 2.5L is expected to deliver an estimated 190 horsepower (140 kW) and 180 lb.-ft. of torque (250 Nm) - about 12 percent more horsepower and 16 percent more torque than the current Ecotec 2.4L, while offering estimated highway fuel economy of more than 30 mpg (final fuel economy numbers are pending).

The new 2.5L will be available next summer, marking the debut of the all-new Ecotec engine family.

Increased efficiency was the top development priority, achieved in part through lower engine friction. It was reduced by an average of 16 percent across the entire speed range, using new technologies such as a variable-displacement oil pump and an actively controlled thermostat.

GM proprietary computational fluid dynamics (CFD) analysis techniques were used to develop an all-new

combustion system with a higher compression ratio, which also helped boost efficiency.

The new combustion system features improved knock resistance and higher-flowing intake and exhaust ports in the cylinder head, which help increase efficiency, power and torque.

The new Ecotec also has increased-authority cam phasing to minimize any compromise between efficiency, performance, emissions and driveability.

Like the current generation of technically advanced Ecotec engines, the new 2.5L also features a high-pressure, direct-injection fuel system, dual overhead camshafts with continuously variable valve timing, electronic throttle control and pistons with jet-spray oil cooling.

It is also expected to be one of the quietest and most refined engines in the segment.

"The noise intensity is 40 percent less than our 2.4L direct-injected engine, which was named one of Ward's 10 Best Engines," said Mike Anderson, global chief engineer.

"Engineers also tuned the 2.5L to deliver more of its torque at lower rpm, giving



The new Ecotec 4-cylinder engine will be the standard powerplant in the 2013 Chevrolet Malibu.

the Malibu a stronger feel at launch and during on-demand maneuvers, such as passing or accelerating on a freeway entrance ramp."

Some new features that give the 2.5L its segment-challenging refinement include:

- Balance shafts relocated from the block to a module with an integrated oil pump in the oil pan to reduce noise and vibration.
- A stiffer and stronger forged steel crankshaft that enables quieter and smoother engine operation at high rpm.
- Inverted-tooth chains for the camshaft and balance shaft drives for quieter operation.

2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit Vehicle Offers Packages to Simplify Ordering

AUBURN HILLS - Dodge and Mopar are in hot pursuit of police car sales.

Dodge and Mopar announced six all-new quality-tested and factory-installed police-equipment packages for the high-performance 2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit. Vehicles are ready-for-duty right from the manufacturer.

"Mopar is adding even more value to our all-new 2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit," said Pietro Gorlier, President and CEO of Mopar, Chrysler Group LLC's service, parts and customer-care brand.

"We are adding proven, quality-tested tactical equipment to this pursuit vehicle and creating a one-stop shop for police customers. With six quick-order packages, police departments have the ability to customize their vehicles to exact specifications."

To enhance Dodge Charger Pursuit's world-class levels of technology, safety, handling and efficient power, Mopar teamed up with industry-equipment leader Crown North America to develop six police packages that are designed to provide law-enforcement officers with the best combination of tactical equipment and performance.

These police-equipment packages feature emergency lighting, audible warning, communications and safety equipment. Industry-leading suppliers involved in the development include Whelen Engineering, Setina Manufacturing and Havis, Inc.

"With rear-wheel-drive, best-in-class V-8 power, seven air bags and up to 27 miles per gallon during highway cruising, the Dodge Charger Pursuit is an excellent police car on its own merits," said Reid Bigland, President and CEO - Dodge Brand.

"Our partnership with Mopar to produce these six police packages takes the car to the next level by allowing our customers to customize their cruisers to meet their specific needs."



2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit.

testing to ensure that its police upfit equipment met and exceeded the heavy-duty durability-cycle tests requirements of the new 2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit.

"Our new packages simplify the police-vehicle order and upfit process," said Peter Grady, Chrysler Group LLC's Vice President of Network Development and Fleet. "With Mopar police equipment, we can deliver quality turn-key police vehicles in a predictable order-to-delivery time."

The base police prep package for the 2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit includes the following:

Emergency Equipment Electrical System Wire Harness: Capable of providing the appropriate power, ground, and fusing for a variety LED, lighting, siren, computer, modem, radar or camera systems.

The wire harness integrates with both the Vehicle Systems Interference Module (VSIM) 24-way connector and the 12-pin connector that Chrysler Group provides at the console.

Power Distribution Center (PDC): Contains the fusing and relays for circuits contained in the wire harness. The PDC is supplied from the battery with two 100-amp main fuses. These fuses are separated in order to accommodate departments that wish to control some circuits with a timing device.

For installers who want to use timer systems in order to prevent power drains on the battery, the PDC will accept the device's output and channel it to the usual elements controlled by timers, including camera, computer, modem and printer systems.

Slide-out Trunk Tray: Provides a stable, easily accessible platform from which the installer can position and install electrical equipment. The trunk tray provides a 37.5-inch by 19-inch mounting surface for electrical and communications gear.

Locking slides provide the movement, allowing a technician easier access to equipment mounted to the tray.

An industry-first integral ground buss bar helps eliminate poor grounding, the most common equipment issue. The tray is adjustable and allows for a variety of equipment heights and needs.

The new 2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit comes equipped with Mopar's police equipment packages is now available for ordering through Chrysler Group LLC's fleet operations.

The 2012 Dodge Charger Pursuit is manufactured at Chrysler Group's Brampton Assembly Plant in Brampton, Ontario. The police equipment installation is completed at the Crown North American upfit center in St. Thomas, Ontario.

Ford Puts a Fresh Coat of Paint on the Louisville Plant Slated to Build Escape

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) - A \$600 million renovation of Ford's Louisville assembly plant is near completion, company officials say, with the facility on course to start production by December.

Ford Motor Co., plant manager John Savona told *The Courier-Journal* that the plant will employ 2,900 people by the end of the year. Combined with the staff at the Kentucky Truck Plant in eastern Louisville, Ford will employ 6,747 people in the area.

Renovations on the plant started nine months ago, aimed at enabling the facility to manufacture the redesigned Escape compact sport utility vehicle.

The redesigned Escape will be revealed at the Los Angeles Auto Show in mid-November, Savona said.

That show vehicle will be assembled in Louisville, he said, with the first production versions rolling off the line

around year's end. "We are transforming this plant into a facility that will be among the most flexible in the world," Savona said.

The plant will be capable of building the new Escape and up to five other different vehicles at once, but Ford officials won't discuss any models beyond the Escape.

As part of the plant's overhaul, the "Louisville Assembly Plant" sign stretching across the front of the factory has been pressure washed for a new coat of paint, marble columns and the 1955-era yellow brick exterior out front will be covered in sleek aluminum panels and silver paint and the old blue-oval Ford sign came down recently in preparation for a new one.

Early versions of that new Escape remained hidden from view during the tour of the plant, which Savona said is 80 percent complete. Those first Escapes are being used to cal-

ibrate tooling and equipment that will soon build the vehicles on four final assembly lines.

The Focus is staying at the Michigan Assembly Plant in Detroit, he added. Now on two shifts, the Michigan Assembly Plant would have to add a third shift before any Focus production comes to Louisville, he said.

The Louisville Assembly Plant had been home to the Explorer SUV until last year and was once slated for closure.

"We could be touring an empty plant today. I will never forget that," Joe Reagan, chief executive of Greater Louisville Inc., the metro chamber of commerce, said recently as he strolled behind a crowd that included Gov. Steve Beshear, Metro Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, and representatives from the offices of U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth and U.S. Sen. Rand Paul.