

# Shoe Boxes to Computers, Fixing Detroit a 'Huge' Job

DETROIT (AP) - Detroit's government needs a 21st-century computer system and to become more efficient or else money spent by the troubled city will go "down a rat hole," the new chief financial officer says.

Jack Martin, a Detroit-area accountant who once worked for Presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, is on the job as a result of an unprecedented financial agreement between the city and the state of Michigan.

To prevent a state takeover, the city agreed to hire a chief financial officer and a program manager and made other promises to fix its finances, including employee contracts.

Martin said it's a "huge job" with "no end to the challenges," and already has met with Mayor Dave Bing, his top aides and members of the city council. He told the media that he wants feedback on how to solve Detroit's problems.

Martin has identified the city's outdated computer systems as a priority. He'd also like to recruit members of President Barack Obama's administration who would be willing to help him in Detroit.

"It's kind of bringing the

city into the 21st century from an IT standpoint," he said.

"And that's something that won't happen overnight, but there's a lot of basic things we can do that I think will help improve the management of the city. With better management come efficiencies that will reduce costs."

Since Detroit's borrowing ability is limited, Martin said he will ask Gov. Rick Snyder for money. If that fails, he'll turn to the federal government.

"No matter how much money you pump in there, if you don't fix the basic structure, it's going to be money down a rat hole," he said.

"To fix the city's deficit and service delivery problem, I think we're going to have to really work on the city's infrastructure. I think most Detroiters just want to get the problem fixed and they don't care how it gets fixed."

Martin, who recently was emergency manager for Highland Park schools, said bankruptcy is unlikely because it would harm the state's bond rating.

Council President Charles Pugh is glad to have Martin on board.

"Let's get going. We have a lot to fix financially," he said.



The 2012 Chevrolet Cruze blasts through thousands of gallons of water while undergoing hi-tech weather testing in the Universal Water Test Booth at the General Motors Milford Proving Ground in Milford. Using 330 nozzles, 825 gallons of water are sprayed onto the car each minute. The intensity of the test exposes weaknesses in the car's seals, which experts can resolve to help ensure drivers and passengers stay dry in a rainstorm.



The 2012 Chevrolet Cruze undergoes hi-tech weather testing in the Dust Booth at the General Motors Proving Ground in Milford. The Dust Booth exposes the car to an extreme number of dust particles to help keep it airtight. The number of auto test labs that run a GM car through various trials before it is released to the customer has increased over the years, all to help GM engineers know that they are ensuring the highest quality standards.

## Not to Fool Mother Nature, GM Brings on the Rain

DETROIT - How many gallons of water could your car withstand?

How about 6,600 gallons?

At Chevrolet, engineers channel Mother Nature to help ensure the 2012 Chevrolet Cruze can withstand the elements - from heat to hurricanes - through high-tech weather-testing simulators.

The Cruze is tested for a range of summer weather and road conditions, including the exclusive Universal Water Test Booth at the General Motors Milford Proving Ground.

Designed to keep the car watertight, the test subjects

the Cruze to a lifetime of water exposure - 6,600 gallons - in just eight minutes.

Using 330 nozzles, 825 gallons of water are sprayed onto the car each minute. The intensity of the test exposes weaknesses in the car's seals, which experts can resolve to help ensure drivers and passengers stay dry in a rainstorm.

The Cruze is also tested in GM's Climatic Wind Tunnel, which replicates hurricane-force winds. Cars also are driven through up to one foot of water in the Flooded Road Lab to help eliminate water leaks into the engine compartment or doors.

The Thermal Chamber tests the car for conditions ranging from arctic cold to desert heat and the Dust Booth exposes the car to an extreme number of dust particles to help keep it airtight.

"We go above and beyond Mother Nature to ensure our vehicles can withstand the elements," said Kevin Dunn, GM

global vehicle development owner - splash contaminants.

"This type of creative testing helps ensure our vehicles can better withstand rain, snow, wind, dust and other day-to-day contaminants."

Through these tests, GM experts bring further quality, durability and safety to consumers, GM says.

Beyond this analysis, the Cruze is equipped with numerous safety features, including the StabiliTrak Electronic Stability Control System with Traction Control.

On slippery surfaces, StabiliTrak helps drivers stay the course by detecting the difference between the path being steered and the direction the vehicle is actually traveling. It then uses the brakes and, if necessary, adjusts engine torque to help keep the Cruze on track.

GM points out that the Cruze was the first car in its class with 10 standard airbags, and even today, no car in its class offers more.

These include frontal, side-impact and knee air bags for the driver and front passenger. Cruze also has a high-strength safety cage and roof-crush resistance that exceeds current federal requirements.

In the event of a storm, GM says, OnStar can help provide Crisis Assist services for all subscribers, regardless of their subscription plan.

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- Provide up-to-date crisis information
- Assist in connecting subscribers to their loved ones by offering complimentary OnStar Hands-Free Calling minutes.

## With Strong May, Pent-Up Demand, Analysts See Auto Sales Picking Up

By TOM KRISHER and DEE-ANN DURBIN  
AP Auto Writers

DETROIT (AP) - Easier credit, hot new cars and falling gas prices kept Americans buying vehicles at a strong pace in May despite bad economic news.

May sales totaled 1.3 million cars and trucks, up 26 percent from the same month a year earlier. It was the best May for the industry since 2008.

The good results surprised some analysts, since car sales usually hew closely to the performance of the stock market and to consumer confidence numbers. In May, confidence was wobbly and the stock market had its worst month in two years.

"We should have had a disastrous new vehicle sales month, but consumers are still interested in the new products," said Jesse Toprak, vice president of market intelligence for the car buying site TrueCar.com. "This was an anomaly."

Toprak thinks June sales will stumble as people weigh troubling headlines, like last week's report that U.S. unemployment rose for the first time in 11 months. He expects sales to pick up at the end of the year as the economy improves and the presidential election ends political uncertainty.

But others don't think the disappointing news will derail the industry's recovery.

"I don't believe that the employment data in and of itself will have an impact," said Ken Czubay, Ford's U.S. sales chief. Czubay said dealer traffic was strong in May, particularly over Memorial Day weekend.

Toyota led sales increases with an 87 percent rise from a year earlier, while Honda saw a 48 percent jump. In May 2011, both companies ran short of cars and trucks after the earthquake in Japan crippled their factories. But their showrooms are full again, and they're rapidly gaining back the market share that they lost to competitors such as Hyundai and GM.

Sales of the Toyota Prius hybrid tripled from a year ago, while Honda Civic sales were up 80 percent.

Chrysler reported a 30 percent increase, followed by Volkswagen at 28 percent and

Nissan at 21 percent. Ford and Hyundai both saw gains of 13 percent. General Motors Co. was up 11 percent.

Among the reasons car buyers put aside worrisome economic news:

- There's pent-up demand. Consumers who held off buying new cars during the recession are reaching the point where they must replace their vehicles. The average truck on the road is a record 10.4 years old and the average car is 11.1, Ford economist Jenny Lin said. GM expects pent-up demand from the recession to boost sales into next year as long as the economy keeps growing.

**"As long as there isn't a shock or further deterioration of the economy on a broader scale, auto sales can power through."**

- Carmakers are rolling out new models faster than ever before, and they're catching buyers' eyes. New models usually fuel demand, even in a weak economy. GM sold 7,205 new Sonic subcompacts in May, for example, a 58 percent increase over Chevrolet's old subcompact, the dull Aveo. Volkswagen's new Passat helped the company to its best May since 1973. Sales of Honda's new CR-V were up 54 percent.

Auto financing is continuing to loosen up, even for people with questionable credit history. The required credit score for people buying cars has dropped to pre-recession levels, according to Experian Automotive. Interest rates have also fallen, from an average new-car loan rate of 4.83 percent in the first three months of 2011 to 4.56 percent in the same period this year. Loan terms are also longer, which lowers payments.

"The financing costs have just been historically low," said George Mokrzan, director of economics at Huntington National Bank in Columbus, Ohio.

Real estate analysts nationwide continue to track housing sales trends.

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