

Detroit Auto Scene

31201 Chicago Road South
Warren, Michigan 48093

586-939-6800

Reader Input or feedback:
News@DetroitAutoScene.com
To Inquire about advertising:
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William Springer II, publisher
and interim news editor;
Lisa A. Torretta, operations

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Ford Sees More Sales in 'Super Segment' Niche

Driven by strong sales of two of Ford's newest vehicles, the Ford Fusion and Escape, Ford's share of the "super segment" – comprised of subcompacts, compacts, midsize sedans and small utilities – stands at 13 percent through the first four months of 2013, representing a gain of 2 share points compared with the same period last year.

The future success of automakers in the United States will in large part be based on market gains in four key vehicle segments – subcompacts, compacts, midsize sedans and small utilities. Combined, these four segments represent more than half of all new vehicle sales in the U.S. In 2004, the super segment was only 35 percent of the total market.

"Ford's share has grown this year faster than all other automakers," said Erich Merkle, Ford sales analyst. "The driving force behind this is our phenomenal rate of growth in the super segment and our continued success with these key vehicles in the long-dominated Japanese regions of the country."

Jeep Brand Earns Winter Work Award

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ing Chrysler Group's vehicle awards, the Jeep Grand Cherokee and the Ram 1500 4x4 are perfect winter companions.

"Congratulations to Jeep Grand Cherokee, our first-ever three-peat winner, for one of the most successful remakes of a vehicle in American history. And Ram 1500 4x4 is the benchmark of the full-size pickup segment with its refinement, capability and efficiency."

The Jeep brand also won honors for a clever advertising campaign touting the popular SUV's capability. In a recent analysis, Phoenix Marketing International judged the ad where a Jeep plows confidently through heavy snow as one of the Top Performing Automotive SUV TV ads.

As the driver rolls up to an office building, the ad voiceover says, "Even heavy snowstorms won't keep you from getting to work. Our apologies."

NEMPA judges cited the Jeep Grand Cherokee's combination of on- and off-road capability, comfort, luxury, sophistication, build quality and value in naming the Grand Cherokee "Official Winter Vehicle of New England."

And they named the Ram 1500 4x4 as "Best All-Weather Pickup Truck" for the second time in four years, the latest of several recent awards for the Ram 2500, including *Motor Trend* Truck of the Year, North American Truck of the Year and even placing among Ward's 10 Best Interiors.

The rugged capability Jeep fans have come to rely on comes courtesy of an array of advanced technology, including three 4x4

GM's Data Center Designed to Help Innovation

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newer vehicle designs and technologies into our customers' hands quicker and improve the bottom line," Akerson said.

"IT is back home where it should be, and it further drives unnecessary complexity from our businesses while improving our operational efficiency and better supporting our business strategy."

Congressman Levin said at the announcement that GM's investment in IT was not inevitable. Many thought the company should go bankrupt, he said, and only through the work and vision of people like Akerson has it been able to come back and invest in its infrastructure and, "ultimately, in America."

For example, crash test simulations enabled by super-computing generate data that is analyzed and applied in vehicle design and development or refinement of safety technologies, saving \$350,000 for each physical crash test avoided.

An application that enables Global Product Development teams to make tooling payments to suppliers at key points throughout the development cycle helps suppliers prioritize the timing of critical parts and reduce overall engineering expenses by millions.

Chevrolet tracked sales data of last year's Impala in markets where car buyers traded in non-GM models, enabling a jump-start to sales of the new 2014 Impala in markets where it previously underperformed.

The enterprise data center and a companion data center at the Milford Proving Ground are part of a previously announced plan to transform GM's global

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IT footprint from 23 facilities to two by 2015. Construction of the \$100 million data center expansion in Milford will begin this summer.

The center is expected to open in July 2014. Like the Warren data center, the Milford facility will focus on high-power computing, using much the same equipment and material. The value of IT equipment for Milford is estimated at \$158 million.

The Milford location was chosen because it is more than 25 and less than 50 miles from Warren, allowing "mirrored" data, so if one facility is off line for any reason, the other will have the same data available without interruption.

"It's all about reducing risk and making sure no one event would affect both centers at the same time," said Curt Loehr, GM Information Technology project manager. "Each Center has its own utility feed using separate paths to provide uninterrupted power."

We even checked weather data going back a half-century and Warren and Milford are affected by separate weather patterns."

GM is saving money by having the data centers on existing campuses, which have negotiated bulk utility rates, existing infrastructure and security.

All of this is part of a larger effort to make GM a world-class company, said Tim Cox, CIO – Global Development Services. Just a few years ago, about 85 percent of GM's IT work was done by contractors.

Akerson said that led to the creation of what he called shadow IT networks. GM's contractors didn't get always get the information to engineers and others fast enough. The result was that employees would set up contracts of their own, often with the same companies GM had contracts with, to get technical information in a timely fashion.

But by having GM, through its four newly-opened Enterprise Data Centers – located in Warren, Phoenix, Austin (Texas) and Atlanta – the company is able to control its data flow and designing programs to aid in the running of the company. They will employ between 1,200 and 1,400 people at the Warren Innovation Center alone.

"The shift is from trying to squeeze every nickle out of IT expenses to turning it into an area of innovation," Cox said.

Akerson said when he first took over GM and started emphasizing IT, a reporter asked him, "Don't you know that GM is a car company?"

"That attitude astounded me,"

Akerson said. "We've turned that notion on its head. There's not a world-class company in the world that doesn't excel at IT."

By creating its own IT solutions, GM will better be able to handle design, payments and production by producing programs suited to the company's specific needs, Cox said. They are hiring thousands of programmers and they want 35 percent of them to be right out of college.

Ultimately, Akerson said, all this is about GM's desire to become the car leader.

"When I got here, there was a core of employees that were tired of being average, being good enough to be in the middle of the pack," Akerson said. "We're seeing the results of that desire right now. We've made great strides in moving from 'good enough' to being the best. There is a will to win here and the people understand what that takes."

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