

New technology means buyers now have the ability to customize their check-in experience at Ford dealerships.

Ford Uses Touchscreen Tech in Dealerships

You might have seen this technology at your local fast food restaurant – a touchscreen kiosk that lets you customize your order just the way you like it.

Well, this same technology is now being used in a larger retail environment – Ford dealerships.

Last fall, Ford began piloting

digital kiosks in dealership service areas to improve the check-in experience in seven Ford dealerships across the US. This and other initiatives are part of an ongoing effort to make each piece of the vehicle ownership experience more personalized, convenient and transparent.

“Our goal is to change the perception of the dealership experience,” said Robert De Filippo, global director, Ford Retail Customer Experience. “We can start to do this by meeting rising expectations for fast and reliable

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GM Honored For Company's Ethical Business Practices

GM has received an honor no other automaker in the world has been able to achieve.

The company was recognized by Ethisphere, a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices, as one of the 2020 World's Most Ethical Companies, said GM spokeswoman Jessica James.

GM is one of only four honorees in the automotive industry and the only automotive original equipment manufacturer, James said. The other three companies are suppliers Aptiv, CooperStandard and Cummins. In 2020, 132 honorees were recognized spanning 21 countries and 51 industries, James said.

The World's Most Ethical Company assessment is based upon the Ethisphere Institute's Ethics Quotient (EQ) framework which offers a quantitative way to assess a company's performance in an objective, consistent and standardized way.

Scores are generated in five key categories: ethics and compliance program (35 percent), corporate citizenship and responsibility (20 percent), culture of ethics (20 percent), governance (15 percent) and leadership and reputation (10 percent).



Mary Barra

“It's easier to live your values when things are going well, but it's more difficult when the going gets tough,” said GM Chairman and CEO Mary Barra. “At General Motors, we are determined to lead the automotive industry in creating a world with zero crashes, zero emissions and zero congestion, and to do it with integrity. This recognition as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies is a testament to the men and women of General Motors who

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Perugi spoke about how the auto industry is changing radically.

Getting Customer Trust Key To Selling New Technology

by Jim Stickford

The automotive world will change more in the next 10 years than it has in the last 100.

That was the message given by Michael Perugi, an auto industry analyst for Acxiom, a national consumer data and market analyst company to the media at a Automotive Press Association event held on Feb. 25 at the Detroit Athletic Club.

Perugi said Acxiom, with the help of JD Power, has performed several studies of the changing automotive world and the public's reactions this new environment.

Perugi said that all trends

show that the vehicles of tomorrow will be more connected than ever. By connected he means having access to the cloud and being able to transmit and receive data much the same way a smart phone does.

To make that connectivity work, companies not normally associated with the auto industry such as Apple and Google are becoming players in the industry. They are working with OEMs like Ford to develop connectivity systems that can deliver services.

And companies like Ford and GM are working with other non-

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FCA Seeking Next Generation of Designers

The students of today will be the car designers of tomorrow.

But without a nudge from an art teacher, a visit to an art school or just plain luck, some of the world's top automotive designers may never have made their mark on history, said FCA spokeswoman Dianna Gutierrez.

And Mark Trostle, head of Ram Truck Design at FCA, wants to change that. Eight years ago, he revived a contest he won as a high school student that helped drive him to where he is today, leading the design efforts for some of the most desired vehicles on the road.

The 2020 Drive for Design contest challenges U.S. high school students in grades 10-12 to sketch a Ram truck of the future. And, just like in the professional world, there is a level of urgency – entries are due by May 1. Three students will be named winners from all valid entries received.

“The landscape of automotive design has changed and today's automotive designers not only sketch cars, they create some of the most advanced user experience systems, work with 3D technology, research color trends and create interior spaces that are multifunctional and beautiful,” said Trostle. “As the field of automotive design grows, it's vital that we increase awareness and educate students and parents about the career opportunities available.”

The Drive for Design competition kicked off during the EyesOn Design commemorative poster unveiling held at the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology in Grosse Pointe Park, Gutierrez said.

Coming back for a second year as a guest judge is Josh Welton, writer, artist and owner of Brown

Dog Welding LLC fabrication and art studio in Detroit. Welton is an accomplished welder, fabricator, teacher, artist, writer, social media influencer, podcast host, entrepreneur and automotive enthusiast. He writes for a variety of outlets and shares his artistic creations on social media. Welton will help review submitted sketches and select this year's winners.

To kick off this year's competition, Trostle and Head of FCA De-

sign Ralph Gilles participated in an “Ask Me Anything” Facebook LIVE broadcast on Feb. 26, hosted by Welton.

Three winners receive an exclusive, behind-the-scenes tour of the FCA Product Design studios in Auburn Hills, and the opportunity to spend one-on-one time with leading automotive designers, Gutierrez said.

They also receive a scholarship

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DRIVE FOR DESIGN

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2020
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eyesondesigncarshow.com

FCA is seeking auto design submissions from students across the U.S.

Dodge Brand Muscle Cars More ‘Fast & Furious’ Than Ever

Who doesn’t want to be in the movies?

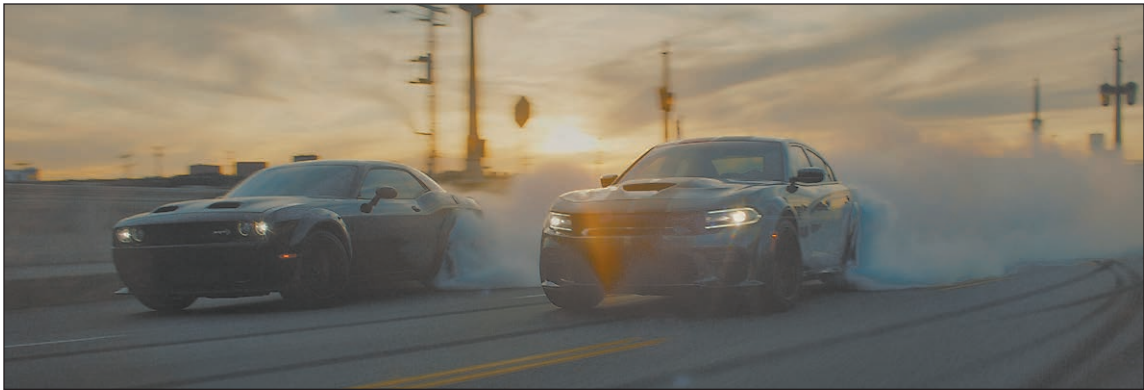
To that end, Dodge is launching its new “House of Power” campaign, featuring the Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat Widebody, the Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat Widebody and the Dodge Durango SRT, in addition to footage from the upcoming action thriller “F9,” the ninth chapter in Universal Pictures’ blockbuster Fast Saga, which has earned more than \$5 billion worldwide, said FCA spokeswoman Diane Morgan.

The campaign will include a 30-second version of the video for television, which will debut this week, in addition to the 60-second version that extends to the brand’s digital and social media channels, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

“House of Power” is the next chapter in the brand’s long-standing partnership with Vin Diesel and the iconic ‘Fast’ franchise,” said Tim Kuniskis, hlobal head of Alfa Romeo and head of Passenger Cars – Dodge, SRT, Chrysler and FIAT, FCA – North America. “‘House of Power’ isn’t a place, it’s a state of mind that Dodge enthusiasts have always shared. It’s for those who don’t fit the mold, but break it ... this state of mind is a brotherhood. A Brotherhood of Muscle.”

To launch the new chapter in its iconic Fast saga, Universal Pictures held a massive fan celebration, “The Road to F9,” on Jan. 31 in Miami. The studio released the all-new trailer for the film and hosted a once-in-a-lifetime concert complete with performances from global music superstars, including Cardi B and Ozuna, who both have roles in “F9.” The 60-second “House of Power” spot first aired on television during the televised event.

Narrated by Vin Diesel, “House



Dodge’s “House of Power” ad campaign will promote its vehicles and the new “Fast & Furious” film.

of Power” is set against the pulse-pounding “Hell’s Bells” track by AC/DC.

Summer 2020 is the time for “F9,” the ninth chapter in the saga that has endured for almost two decades and has earned more than \$5 billion around the world, Morgan said.

Vin Diesel’s Dom Toretto is leading a quiet life off the grid with Letty and his son, little Brian, but they know that danger always lurks just over their peaceful horizon. This time that threat will force Dom to confront the sins of his past if he’s going to save those he loves most.

His crew joins together to stop a world-shattering plot led by the most skilled assassin and high-performance driver they’ve ever encountered: a man who also happens to be Dom’s forsaken brother, Jakob (John Cena, next year’s “The Suicide Squad”).

“F9” sees the return of Justin Lin as director, who helmed the third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the series when it transformed into a global blockbuster, Morgan said.

The action hurtles around the globe, from London to Tokyo, from Central America to Edinburgh, and from a secret bunker in Azerbaijan to the teeming

streets of Tblisi. Along the way, old friends will be resurrected, old foes will return, history will be rewritten and the true meaning of family will be tested like never before.

The film stars returning cast members Michelle Rodriguez, Tyrese Gibson, Chris “Ludacris” Bridges, Jordana Brewster, Nathalie Emmanuel and Sung Kang, with Oscar-winner Helen

Mirren and Oscar-winner Charlize Theron. “F9” also features Grammy-winning superstar Cardi B as new franchise character Leysa, a woman with a connection to Dom’s past, and a cameo by Reggaeton sensation Ozuna.

“F9” is produced by Neal H. Moritz, Vin Diesel, Jeff Kirschbaum, Joe Roth, Justin Lin, Clayton Townsend and Samantha Vincent. www.thefastsaga.com.

Amazon Uses Old GM Plant

DOVER, Del. (AP) – Delaware officials have agreed to give \$4.5 million in taxpayer money to online retail giant Amazon, which raked in \$11.6 billion in profit last year.

The state Council on Development Finance voted Feb. 24 to give Amazon.com Services LLC a Delaware Strategic Fund grant for the company’s plan to establish a distribution facility on the site of a former General Motors plant that was shuttered in 2009.

A Nevada-based commercial development company that has worked with Amazon in the past has applied to build a five-story, 3.8 million-square-foot facility at the former Boxwood Road assembly plant in Newport.

Amazon said in its grant application that it plans to spend \$50 million for new equipment and machinery, including \$48.5 million in equity. The remaining \$1.5 million will come from the strategic fund grant, which also includes \$3 million “performance grant” for Amazon’s promise to create 1,000 full-time jobs over three years. Amazon is planning to hire 50 managers with estimated salaries of \$60,000, and 950 unskilled or semiskilled “associates” who would be paid \$15 or \$15.86 per hour.

The grant funding was recommended by the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, a “public-private” entity incorporated by Democratic Gov. John Carney.

Doering Fleet Management Gets Partner

Doering Fleet Management and eIQ Mobility are partnering to provide fleets with seamless EV deployments.

eIQ Mobility provides fleets with highly accurate EV Feasibility and Sustainability Assessments using EValuate, their online decision platform, said Doering spokesman John Sternal. Clients receive detailed analytics on which EVs are the best fit for their applications. EValuate defines which locations to prioritize for best EV deployment, specifies the charging infrastructure, and details anticipated Total Cost of Ownership with Carbon emissions implications.

Now clients can work with Doering Fleet Management to source and finance EVs and charging infrastructure, manage the fleet through their lifecycle, and remarket their EVs using Doering Fleet Management’s EV management tech and expertise.

Adam Berger, President of Doering said, “We are thrilled you partner with eIQ Mobility to accelerate the deployment of EV fleets. The two major hurdles we see are data analysis to aid decision making, and infrastructure support. eIQ Mobility fills that gap artfully with data-driven recommendations about EV feasibility and product match.”

“Our fleet clients range from Fortune 500 corporations with tens of thousands of vehicles to dynamic regional companies with a few hundred units. They are looking for data-driven EV Feasibility assessments. eIQ Mobility accelerates the decisions for our clients on EV model choice, optimal locations, carbon reduction, and EV charging needs,” said Sila Kiliccote, CEO, eIQ Mobility.



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Ford Honors History of Designer McKinley Thompson, Jr.

Bronco is the product of legendary talent, from the teams who won the Baja 1000 to the collectors who restore them today.

But there's one legend in the story of the Bronco who not only helped create the first Ford 4x4 sports-utility vehicle design, he made history, becoming one of the first African American designers in the industry, said Ford spokesman Jiyan Cadiz.

McKinley Thompson Jr., a Ford designer who helped pen the first-generation Bronco, was the first African American designer hired at Ford Motor Company after graduating from ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California with a degree in transportation design in 1956.

His first assignment was at Ford's advanced design studio in Dearborn, working under George Walker, vice president of Ford design, Cadiz said. Among his projects was a light-duty cab-forward truck, several concept sketches for the soon-to-be Ford Mustang and the legendary Ford GT40.

Thompson also worked on the futuristic space-age Ford Gyron, a two-wheeled concept car that was on display at the Century of Progress exhibit at the Ford Rotunda in 1961.

"McKinley was a man who followed his dreams and wound up making history," said Ford Bronco interior designer Christopher Young. "He not only broke through the color barrier in the world of automotive design, he helped create some of the most iconic consumer products ever – from the Ford Mustang, Thunderbird and Bronco – designs that are not only timeless but have been studied by generations of designers."

Among Thompson's more noteworthy projects was the Bronco sports-utility vehicle, an open-air 4x4 concept featuring a square, short body and high ground clearance with minimal front and rear overhangs for optimum off-road capability, Cadiz said. One of his designs, titled "Package Proposal #5 for Bronco," rendered July 24, 1963, influenced the design language that would become iconic attributes of the first-generation Bronco.

In Thompson's proposed design, the form and function of the wheels positioned at the far corners of the body for a confident and aggressive go-anywhere stance, while the curve of the wheel arches smoothing out conveyed speed.

"I believe the hardest thing for a person like McKinley to do was working within the constraints given him to make a beautiful product," said Young. "Engineering dictates size and functionality, then manufacturing limits how it can be stamped and assembled, and finance says you have to build it for a low price."

Thompson's concept for an all-purpose compact two-door SUV is a theme he would return to later in life.

After retiring from Ford, he worked to design and build a concept he envisioned as an affordable all-purpose vehicle named the Warrior, Cadiz said. The small utility vehicle was based on a one-piece fiberglass body, a process Thompson dreamed of decades earlier.

Thompson was born in 1922 and grew up in Queens, New York. He had a keen interest in cars from the time he was young, and later recalled seeing a silver-gray DeSoto Airflow when he was around 12, Cadiz said.

"It just so happened that the clouds opened up for the sunshine to come through," he said in an interview documented by The Henry Ford. "It lit that car up like a searchlight." Thompson recalled running toward it, but the light turned green. "I was never so impressed with anything in all my life," he said. "I knew that's what I wanted to do – I wanted to be an automobile designer."

Thompson served in the Army Signal Corps in World War II, learning drafting and working as an engineering layout coordinator. After the war, that work provided for him and his growing family, but Thompson's love of cars and his dream of being a designer persisted, Cadiz said.

In the early 1950s, he entered a design contest in *Motor Trend* magazine, submitting a turbine car with a reinforced plastic body, both concepts that were trending in the postwar era.

He won the contest, then went on to enroll in the transportation design department at ArtCenter College of Design.

Later on in his Ford career, Thompson worked on the side to create his dream car in a rented garage in Detroit from 1969 to 1979, enlisting the help of Wallace Triplett, who had also broken the color barrier as the first African American draftee to play for the Detroit Lions in 1949.



Thompson helped pen the first-generation Bronco in the 60s and was Ford's first African American designer.



This first-generation Bronco was originally introduced to the market back in the mid-1960s.

Together, they built a prototype and pitched the plans to burgeoning automakers in developing nations, Cadiz said. Thompson hoped to change these countries for the better, much the same way Henry Ford envisioned with the Model T.

Eventually, Thompson pulled the plug on the project – but not on his dreams. He retired from

Ford in 1984 and moved to Arizona with his wife. He passed away on March 5, 2006.

"McKinley's influence, beyond his work on the original Bronco, helped pave the way for others

like him who might not have had an opportunity to express their creative talents and live their dreams to be a part of one of America's greatest companies," said Young.

Driver on Video Game Caused Tesla Crash

By TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

Washington (AP) – The National Transportation Safety Board says the driver of a Tesla SUV who died in a Silicon Valley crash two years ago was playing a video game on his smartphone at the time.

Chairman Robert Sumwalt said at the start of a hearing Feb. 25 that partially automated driving systems like Tesla's Autopilot cannot drive themselves. Yet he says drivers continue to use them without paying attention. He says the board made recommendations to six automakers in 2017 to stop the problem and only Tesla has failed to respond.

The board will determine a cause of the crash at the hearing and make recommendations to prevent it from happening again.

Sumwalt says government regulators have ignored the board's previous recommendations for measures to prevent these crashes.

The March 2018 crash involving a Tesla Model X SUV killed Apple engineer Walter Huang when it swerved and slammed

into a concrete barrier dividing freeway and exit lanes.

Just before the crash, the Tesla steered to the left into a paved area between the freeway travel lanes and an exit ramp, the NTSB said. It crashed into the end of the concrete barrier. The car's forward collision didn't alert Huang, and its automatic emergency braking did not activate, the NTSB said.

Also, Huang did not brake, and there was no steering movement detected to avoid the crash, the board's staff said.

NTSB investigators previously found that Tesla's system became confused at a freeway exit and was a factor in the crash.

Autopilot is designed to keep a vehicle in its lane and keep a safe distance from vehicles in front of it. It also can change lanes with driver approval. Tesla says Autopilot is intended to be used for driver assistance and that drivers must be ready to intervene at all times.

NTSB documents released earlier this month quoted Huang's relatives as saying he had previously complained about Autopilot malfunctioning

and swerving in the area near where crash occurred.

"If you own a car with partial automation, you do not own a self-driving car," Sumwalt said in opening statements. "This means that when driving in the supposed 'self-driving' mode, you can't read a book, you can't watch a movie or TV show, you can't text and you can't play video games."

Sumwalt said the NTSB had called for technology more than nine years ago to disable distracting functions of smartphones while the user is driving, but no action has been taken.

Don Karol, the NTSB's project manager for highway safety, told the board that the staff is recommending that cell phone companies program phones to automatically lock out distracting functions such as games and phone calls while someone is driving. The staff also recommends that companies enact policies to prevent use of company issued cell phones while workers are driving.

"Lockout mechanisms should be default setting and should automatically lock out distracting functions," Karol told the board.

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Ford Uses Touchscreen Tech in Dealerships

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service and letting each customer know they matter to us.”

Liberty Automotive Group in Ohio is one of the Ford dealerships involved in the pilot program. As a result of the increase in efficiency and customer satisfaction from the digital kiosk in their Brunswick location, the automotive group recently purchased additional kiosks for some of its other locations, De Filippo said.

“The way I see it, there are two types of customers,” Andrew Bellavia, Chief Operating Officer of Liberty Automotive Group said. “Customers who are coming in for quick service or maintenance on low-mileage vehicles who want to get in and out quickly, and then customers who have unique cases that they want to discuss in-depth with our service staff. These kiosks provide an option to the customer who wants to move fast, freeing up service advisors to address the more complex concerns.”

Bellavia said in December the kiosk in the Brunswick location assisted 241 out of roughly 1,100 customers, and 85 percent of these said the kiosk made their check-in process easier. According to Bellavia, a kiosk check-in on average takes a quarter of the time of a service advisor check-in.

Across the seven pilot dealers, the average customer check in time using the kiosk is just over two minutes. Additionally, 84 percent of Bellavia’s users said the kiosk made their check in experience easier and 90 percent said it was able to answer all of their questions.

Imagine pulling up to a busy service area, De Filippo said. All service advisors are busy assisting other customers. A wait seems eminent. Enter the digital service kiosk. Not unlike digital kiosks seen in other retail establishments such as fast-food or airline travel, digital kiosks in dealership service areas allow customers to check-in and select services without interaction with a service advisor.

Upon approaching the kiosk, the customer is prompted to enter their phone number via touchscreen. From there, the customers’ primary information is displayed for verification of name, address, vehicle type, and preferred method of contact.

The customer then chooses the services their vehicle needs from various menu options and selects how they would like to be contacted with updates regarding their vehicle service. Recalls pertinent to the customers’ vehicle also are displayed on the screen during the check-in process.

Outdoor versions of the kiosk also are being piloted to provide access to vehicle drop-off or pick-up any time of day or night, regardless of service center hours, De Filippo said.

Outdoor kiosks offer similar options as the indoor iterations and will eventually have the added capability of accepting and delivering keys, De Filippo said.

GM Honored For Company’s Ethical Business Practices

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are committed to doing the right thing, even when it’s hard.”

GM announced its vision in 2017 and has since committed to an all-electric, zero-emissions future. The goal is for people to live safer, more sustainable lives, Barra said. In 2019, she signed the Business Roundtable’s statement on the purpose of a corporation and committed to lead GM for the benefit of all stakeholders – customers, employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders.

More recently, GM accelerated its sustainability goals to source 100 percent of its global electricity from renewables by 2040 and enable the reuse or recycling of 100 percent of EV batteries, James said.

In addition to setting sustainability goals, GM committed to increasing the percentage of sustainable materials in vehicles. In partnership with suppliers, at least 50 percent of the materials in GM vehicles will be sustainable by 2030.

“Congratulations to everyone at General Motors for earning this recognition,” said Ethisphere’s Chief Executive Officer, Timothy Erblisch. “This is a moment to acknowledge the leaders working to advance corporate

cultures defined by integrity and affirm those companies contributing to broader societal imperatives and the greater good.”

GM was also included in the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index in January 2020, James said. The GEI tracks the financial performance of public companies committed to supporting gender equality through policy development, representation and transparency.

Grounded in Ethisphere’s proprietary Ethics Quotient, the World’s Most Ethical Companies assessment process includes more than 200 questions on culture, environmental and social practices, ethics and compliance activities, governance, diversity and initiatives to support a strong value chain.

The process serves as an operating framework to capture and codify the leading practices of organizations across industries and around the globe. Best practices and insights from the 2020 honorees will be released in a report and webcast in March and April of this year.

All companies that participate in the assessment process receive an Analytical Scorecard providing them a holistic assessment of where their programs stand against the demanding standards of the leading companies.

FCA Seeking Next Generation of Designers

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to attend the Precollege Summer Experience Transportation Design program at College for Creative Studies, a leading art and design college in Detroit, from which both Trostle and Gilles graduated.

The summer program curriculum includes the fundamentals of gestural sketching, drawing automotive concepts in perspective and how to translate designs into 3D models.

The FCA Product Design Office is again partnering with EyesOn Design, which focuses on the automotive community and students coming together to commemorate, reflect and appreciate the craftsmanship and beauty of classic and modern vehicle design.

Drive for Design winners will receive their awards on Sunday, June 14 at EyesOn Design’s “Vision Honored” Black Tie and Silent Auction and will serve as Junior Judges at the EyesOn Design Car Show, held every Father’s Day weekend at the historic Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores.

For detailed contest rules and information on how to submit sketches, visit www.FCAdrivefordesign.com.

Students and parents can follow the FCA North America so-

cial channels for regular posts to educate and inform followers about careers in automotive design.

Weekly updates will be posted every Wednesday on the Drive for Design Facebook page ([Facebook.com/DriveForDesign](https://www.facebook.com/DriveForDesign)), the FCA North America Facebook page ([Facebook.com/FiatChrysler.NorthAmerica](https://www.facebook.com/FiatChrysler.NorthAmerica)), the FCA North America Twitter (@FiatChrysler_NA) and FCA North America Instagram (@FiatChrysler_NA) channels using the hashtag #DriveForDesign.

Launched in 2013, the FCA Product Design Office created its Drive for Design contest as an innovative way to educate young artists about careers in automotive design.

Starting locally in Detroit, Drive for Design has grown to become a national contest that awards talented students with prizes and unique opportunities to further develop their design skills.

Past winners of the contest have come from schools across the country.

The College for Creative Studies (CCS) is a nonprofit, private college authorized by the Michigan Education Department to grant bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

CCS, located in midtown Detroit, strives to provide the

school’s students with the tools needed for successful careers in the dynamic and growing creative industries such as in advertising design, art education, crafts, entertainment arts and fashion accessories design.

Acxiom Sees a Greater Auto Tech Future

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traditional companies, such as Amazon. It’s now possible for Amazon customers who sign up for a special app to get packages sent directly to customers’ cars.

Food companies like Dunkin’ Donuts and Dominoes are working with car companies to make it possible to order food from one’s car for quick pickup without waiting in line.

This is all new and presents challenges for car companies to navigate, Perugi said. Among the difficulties is coming up with services people want and will pay for. All too often companies will offer tech that people don’t actually use.

Another issue being faced by car companies and their tech partners is data collection. As today’s vehicles become smart phones with wheels, the question of who owns the data generated by people as they drive their vehicles becomes more important.

Acxiom studies show that people are very concerned about privacy breaches. Over the past several years, privacy breaches of different companies has been reported in the news, Perugi said. Every time such a breach is reported, people become a little more skeptical of the new technology. That makes it a that much more difficult selling people on this technology, which can be costly to OEMs that have spent billions developing new connectivity systems.

Perugi said that things like ride sharing have different levels of popularity among different generations. Acxiom has found that as younger people age up and start having families and moving into their new homes, they really want to own their own vehicles and depend less on services like Uber and Lyft.

And health care providers have found that actually being able to send a single vehicle to pick up an elderly patient and take that patient to the doctor’s office is cheaper and more popular than sending out a bus to pickup patients to send them to many different offices.

“But one thing we’ve found is that concerns about data securi-

ty are high and absolutely the same across all generations,” Perugi said. “We’ve found that 68 percent of people will be willing to share information if it saves them money on insurance. About 66 percent will share information to received maintenance alerts. We’ve also learned that support for sharing info such as driver behavior has gone down.”

“People are willing to share info with relevant parties, but they are concerned about data security. Consumers are demanding that their data be kept safe and they want car companies and their partners to treat that data with the utmost integrity.”

Perugi said that Acxiom has also seen a slight drop in support for AV technology.

He attributes that to the fact that the media has been reporting on accidents and fatalities where drivers have been using AV tech.

The public has noticed this, Perugi said, and they are not as excited about AV tech. They will have to be convinced that it will work and that will mean hard work by OEMs.

“People like AV tech because it has the potential to make driving safer for humans, but accidents have show people that these systems will have to be able to let people take over quickly when the situation calls for it,” Perugi

said. “And people want these systems to be hack proof. It will take time to regain lost trust.”

Overall, Perugi said that as these new technologies enter vehicles, engineers and designers will need to remember to make the consumer the center of the new ecosystems and that the data will have to be secure.

Perugi also touched briefly on alternatives to leasing. He said that Volvo is really the only OEM to enjoy success with its “all-one-payment plan.

Under Volvo’s plan, people will make one payment to drive a Volvo XC40. That includes lease costs and insurance. They can also switch vehicles in a year if they don’t like the XC40.

This simplified system avoids having to make 36 monthly lease payments and insurance payments. Additionally, they can switch vehicles if they don’t like the vehicle within a year. But they don’t have to worry about trying to switch vehicles every month, unlike the Cadillac program.

It’s a cheaper and simpler alternative to leasing and Volvo will be expanding it to more vehicles. Perugi said the company also had success because they targeted a specific demographic with the XC40 program. It beats trying to sell everything to everybody.

Philanthropist Betting Big on Detroit

DETROIT (AP) – A wealthy real estate developer announced in a Feb. 21 statement that he is donating \$100 million to help kick-start a fundraising campaign for construction of the University of Michigan’s Detroit Center for Innovation.

Stephen M. Ross said the center will help usher Detroit “into a new era of leadership in technology.” The Detroit-born Michigan graduate is chairman of The Related Companies and also majority owner of the Miami Dolphins.

The statement from the Detroit Center for Innovation project says the idea is for it to become a talent pipeline to existing companies and also to draw new businesses to the city.

An initial phase of the project will, among other things, include

a University of Michigan anchor academic building, incubator and start-up services, as well as a hotel and conference center. Construction is expected to begin in 2021.

The 14-acre center will be located at the site of the former Wayne County Jail in Detroit. The University of Michigan’s flagship campus is in Ann Arbor, around 40 miles to the west.

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan called the \$100 million donation “historic” and the auto industry is betting on Detroit becoming a center of technological advances and that the announced gift “builds on that momentum.”

Dan Gilbert, chairman of the Bedrock real estate company, also made a significant land donation to the project.

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Chevy Looks to Expand Equinox Marketshare

by Jim Stickford

The popularity of SUVs is growing every year and Chevrolet has worked hard to position its portfolio to take advantage of that trend.

Which is why the brand has refreshed the Equinox with an emphasis on safety and design, said GM spokesman Kevin Kelly.

"What we've found that what is important for many SUV buyers is safety," Kelly said. "And the Equinox falls into the largest SUV segment as a mid-size. There's a lot of competition and it's growing so we concentrated on freshening the Equinox with new safety features."

Chevy, as part of its efforts to improve Equinox market share, has also released a new trim level of the vehicle – the RS, Kelly said.

"This trim level offers buyers a more spirited and aggressive look," Kelly said. "It's something extra for those looking for something extra."

The refreshing of the Equinox is part of a larger effort by Chevrolet to take advantage of the growing popularity of SUVs, Kelly said. In addition to offering vehicles like the Equinox and the Trax, Chevrolet has also added the Trailblazer to the brand's SUV portfolio.

As a result, buyers now have a choice of a wide range of sizes if they're in the market for an SUV. The vehicles range from the smaller Trax to the Suburban, Equinox and Trailblazer.

But it was important to refresh the Equinox for a couple of reasons, Kelly said. It's Chevrolet's second-best selling vehicle, finishing only behind the Silverado. Sales of the Equinox have grown in nine of the last 10 years.

And second, it represents Chevrolet in the most popular SUV segment. As more and more OEMs offer vehicles in the mid-size segment, it's important that Chevrolet provide trim levels and safety features that make the Equinox stand out from the ever more crowded mid-size segment.

"We know that people care about safety," Kelly said. "So it only makes sense to offer a strong range of safety features. And it's important to promote those features to the public so they know what the Equinox now has to offer."

Firm Offers \$5K Scholarship

Michigan Auto Law is offering \$5,000 in scholarships to Michigan high school students who create the best persuasive video, tweet or graphic to convince young drivers to reduce distractions while driving. The application deadline is March 31.

Winners will be announced in April, during National Distracted Driving Awareness month, said Michigan Auto Law spokeswoman Christine Snyder.

The annual Kelsey's Law Distracted Driving Awareness Scholarship is named after Kelsey Raffaele of Sault Ste. Marie who died in a cell phone-related automobile crash at the age of 17 in 2010. Kelsey's mother, Bonnie Raffaele, worked tirelessly with the Michigan legislature to enact Kelsey's Law in 2013, which prohibits Level 1 and 2 drivers from using a handheld mobile phone while driving a vehicle.

"Distracted driving is a problem for all ages, but especially for our newest drivers," says Michigan Auto Law President and Attorney Steven Gursten. "Teens play a crucial role in convincing their peers and others of the importance of putting down phones to save lives."

The scholarship application requirements are open to high school juniors and seniors (Class of 2020 and 2021) attending any



Chevrolet made bold changes to the exterior of the Equinox as part of the vehicle's mid-cycle refresh.

The refreshed 2021 Equinox will be available in dealerships this fall, Kelly said. Key standard safety features will include automatic emergency braking, front pedestrian braking, forward collision alert and IntelliBeam headlights.

Other key safety features are lane keep assist with lane departure warning, rear vision cameras and a following distance indicator.

The 2021 Equinox will also have several driver assistance features, Kelly said. They include camera-based adaptive cruise control, automatic parking assist, safety alert seats, rear cross traffic alert, front park assist, rear park assist and side blind zone alert.

The RS trim level is meant to be a sporty vehicle with a street-inspired look, Kelly said. Among the design and style features are a gloss black grill, 19-inch Android wheels, black badging, an special RS shift knob and “eye-catching” red stitching on the vehicle’s black interior upholstery. “With the mid-size SUV segment growing in popularity with the public, OEMs are putting a lot of effort into the vehicles they’re making for that niche,” Kelly said. “So we need to be fresh and if we do it right, we can continue to grow out market share. We



The interior of the refreshed Equinox uses contrasting red and black.

had a pretty strong SUV portfolio and now that we've refreshed the Equinox and added vehicles like

the Trailblazer, we're in a strong position to take advantage of the market."

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CAR Study – GM Responsible for 681K Jobs

A new study from the Center for Automotive Research (CAR) finds that General Motors (GM)–the largest automaker in terms of U.S. market share and second-largest in terms of U.S. production volume – is a significant contributor to the U.S. economy and the economies of the nine states in which GM has manufacturing facilities.

The total employment contribution of GM’s 83,860 jobs is 681,000 jobs in the U.S. economy – including those who work for GM.

The analysis produces an estimated employment multiplier of 8.1, meaning that there are approximately 7.1 jobs supported in the U.S. economy for every job at GM, said CAR spokeswoman Katie Ramsburg.

CAR estimated the economic contribution of GM’s 83,860 direct U.S. employees in Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and the 41 other states as a whole for 2019.

GM’s direct employment generated an additional 207,420 jobs at companies that supply the automaker (intermediate impacts) and 291,280 additional jobs in the U.S. economy that are supported when General Motors direct and indirect employees spend their earnings (expenditure-induced impacts).

While GM’s total employment contribution supports jobs in nearly every sector of the U.S. economy, almost 60 percent of the total employment impact of GM’s 2019 U.S. operations was concentrated in just five U.S. economic sectors: manufacturing, professional and technical services, construction, retail trade, and wholesale trade.

General Motor’s U.S. employment also supports USD 51.6B in private non-farm earnings and USD 13.7B in government re-

ceipts from personal income taxes and contributions for government social insurance and transfer payments.

“General Motors anchors the economies in the nine states where the company manufactures vehicles, parts, and components,” said Kristin Dzielick, CAR’s Vice President of Research and lead author of the study, “and GM jobs pay better than average wages–boosting the company’s economic contribution even more.”

Contribution of General Motors Manufacturing Operations to the United States Economy & the Economies of Nine States in 2019:

- **U.S.** Total Direct Employment – 83,567; Total Employment Contribution – 681,044; Total Earnings Contribution – \$51.6 billion.

- **Michigan** – Direct Employment – 46,817, Total Employment Contribution – 200,436, Total Earnings Contribution – \$14.5 billion.
- **Indiana** – Direct Employment – 6,819, Total Employment Contribution – 44,735, Total Earnings Contribution – \$3.2 billion.
- **Texas** – Direct Employment – 6,637, Total Employment Contribution – 64,909, Total Earnings Contribution – \$4.7 billion.
- **Missouri** – Direct Employment – 4,155, Total Employment Contribution – 22,365, Total Earnings Contribution – \$1.6 billion.
- **New York** – Direct Employment – 4,043, Total Employment Contribution – 19,890, Total Earnings Contribution – \$2.9 billion.

- **Tennessee** – Direct Employment – 3,953, Total Employment Contribution – 27,069, Total Earnings Contribution – \$14.5 billion.
- **Ohio** – Direct Employment – 3,768, Total Employment Contribution – 46,766, Total Earnings Contribution – \$3.3 billion.
- **Kansas** – Direct Employment – 2,430, Total Employment Contribution – 10,678, Total Earnings Contribution – \$800 million.
- **Kentucky** – Direct Employment – 1,074, Total Employment Contribution – 12,400, Total Earnings Contribution – \$800 million.
- **Remaining States** – Direct Employment – 4,161, Total Employment Contribution – 221,388, Total Earnings Contribution – \$17.9 billion.



While GM may be headquartered in Detroit, the company is responsible for creating jobs across the country.

Retired School Teacher Patents Device to Protect Tires

NITRO, W.Va. (AP) – E.J. Smith is a stickler for detailing.

The retired Nitro High School science teacher’s two ATVs are spotless, as are his car, vintage pickup and Jeep CJ5 – the hoods of which are clean enough to dine upon, in the unlikely event Smith would consider such an activity.

Decades of washing and detailing his vehicles routinely included the task of spraying cleaning products on his tires, which caused him some concern, due to their often caustic content.

“The chemicals in the tire cleaning products can damage the wheels,” causing discoloration, corrosion and pitting to occur, he said. With some custom wheels selling for \$1,000 or more, there would seem to be a value in keeping them free of clean-and-shine tire sprays, he reasoned.

To solve that problem while doing his own detailing, Smith cut a circle from a thin sheet of wood that matched the wheel diameter on his vehicles and installed a lightweight handle in the middle. The homemade device allowed him to easily shield his wheels from corrosive spray as he applied tire cleaner.

“After a while, people started seeing me using it and told me they thought it was a good idea,” Smith said. “Some of them asked why I didn’t patent it, and the more I thought about it, the more I thought, ‘Why not?’”

Smith said he failed to act on other ideas for inventions only to see others patent and produce them. Smith thought his car care gadget might be relatively easy to submit for a patent and then mass produce from molded plastic.

He turned to longtime friend and fellow retired science teacher Mark T. Allen for financial backing. Allen is a 32-year veteran of the Fayette County schools system and owner of Summersville Lake Marina and Sarge’s Dive Shop in neighboring Nicholas County.

One of their first significant expenses was hiring an attorney to guide them through patenting.

“A lot of people have told us that a couple of schoolteachers would never get this thing patented,” Smith said. “It took two years, but we got the job done.”

The patent for the gadget was awarded last September while a second patent application for add-ons to the device was recently accepted and is listed as patent pending, according to Smith.

Plastic injection molds likely will be used to produce the gadget Smith and Allen are developing. To improve upon the original device, the plastic discs will contain a groove to hold a rubber seal in place to secure it to wheels and wheel rims, blocking tire spray in those areas.

The two retired teachers have begun to contact potential producers of their invention. Ideally, the rights to market the device would be bought by a car care retail chain and sold through its outlets.

Retirement from teaching has proved a far cry from rocking chairs and porch-sitting for Smith and Allen.

Smith continues to teach NRA-sanctioned handgun certification and concealed carry classes, which he began doing 25 years

ago. With his wife, Viktoriya, he operates a professional metal detecting business to help people find lost jewelry and other metallic objects. His company also assists police in finding shell casings and bullets at crime scenes.

Smith taught science classes in Kanawha County schools for 34 years, including 18 as a night school teacher. During 15 years of that period, he taught DNR Hunter Safety classes.

Smith is a scuba divemaster, while Allen is a scuba instructor.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan presented Allen with the President’s Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching.

Allen taught middle school science in Fayette County schools for 32 years.

Edmunds Explores Dramatic Growth in Popularity of Full-Sized Truck Market

Trucks are making a big comeback, according to a new report released by the car-shopping experts at Edmunds.

Edmunds data reveals that market share for full-size trucks hit a 14-year high in 2019, constituting 14.5 percent of the new vehicle market, and full-size truck sales climbed to 2.4 million in 2019, which represents a 123 percent increase from 2009, said Edmunds spokeswoman Talia James-Armand.

According to Edmunds experts, the strength of the economy, lower gas prices and stable interest rates, combined with an explosion of options and amenities in the segment, have helped drive full-size truck sales to post-recession record levels.

“Shoppers used to think of trucks primarily as bench-seat

utilitarian vehicles, but today, every creature comfort that one would expect or want in a luxury vehicle is now available in a truck,” said Ivan Drury, senior manager of insights at Edmunds. “The range of options available in the full-size truck market right now is catching the eye of buyers with more discretionary income, and many of them are ditching their SUVs to make the jump. And since full-size trucks retain their value so well, once a shopper gets pulled into the fold they’re more likely to remain loyal to the segment.”

Edmunds data reveals that full-size trucks have outpaced other segments in price growth because shoppers are opting for higher trim levels, features, and physically bigger trucks overall. In 2019, the average transac-

tion price (ATP) for a full-size truck was \$49,888, more than \$12,500 higher than the industry average of \$37,310. Ten years ago, the ATP for a full-size truck was \$34,987, which was \$6,300 higher than the industry average of \$28,609.

“There’s no question that truck shoppers are willing to dig a bit deeper into their wallets to get what they want, and prices look like they’re only going to continue rising,” said Drury.

The Edmunds 2020 Truck Report also takes a deeper look into the fierce competition brewing between the biggest players in the truck segment, with a particular focus on how the perennial third best-selling truck, the Ram pickup, outsold the second best-selling truck, the Chevy Silverado, for the first time in 2019.

Peugeot Makes Record Profits Despite China

PARIS (AP) – Despite record profits last year, Peugeot maker PSA Group said Feb. 26 it lost 700 million euros (\$760 million) in China – and that was before the new virus hit a key manufacturing center.

As it prepares to merge with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, PSA forecast a cloudy market for 2020, with shrinking auto sales in Europe and Russia and stagnation in Latin America – and a question mark around China.

PSA’s losses in China in 2019 involved two joint ventures that it decided to scale back because of shrinking car sales. Early this year, PSA suspended activity at its plants in Wuhan, the epicenter of the virus that apparently emerged from China late last year.

“The virus didn’t help,” Chief Financial Officer Philippe de Rovira told reporters. He said Wednesday it still expects to restart on March 11, and that it’s too early to predict the overall financial impact of the virus on PSA’s activities and sales worldwide.

“It’s clear this is a big risk for the whole industry,” CEO Carlos Tavares said.

Overall, PSA has been on the rise and working to consolidate with rivals as the industry grapples with the transition to electric and driver-less vehicles. PSA reported a 13 percent boost in profit for 2019, to 3.2 billion euros. It said the company saved 550 million euros last year through its purchase of Germany’s Opel and Britain’s Vauxhall from GM.

Out-of-Control Tractor Hits Used Car Lot

KINSTON, N.C. (AP) – A tractor hauling a piece of equipment malfunctioned and ran over a number of vehicles that were parked in a used car lot, police said Feb. 27.

Kinston police said the tractor was hauling a dirt pan used in landscaping when it ran over at least five cars parked at Faith Automotive Sales, WITN reported.

According to police, the tractor had a mechanical malfunction which caused it to veer to the right and run right into the used car dealership’s parking lot, damaging as least five of the vehicles there.

No injuries were reported, and an employee at the dealership estimated damage caused by the out-of-control tractor to the vehicles to be roughly around \$20,000.

Police closed northbound lanes of N.C. Highway 11 as a result of the accident.



Ford's scooter arm Spin is now seeking employees in Germany as the brand expands across borders.

Virus Still Shaking Markets Across Globe

BANGKOK (AP) – Shares skidded in Asia on Feb. 24 after reports of a surge in new virus cases outside China. The decline followed a sell-off Feb.21 on Wall Street.

South Korea's Kospi dropped 3.9 percent to 2,079.04, while the S&P ASX/200 in Sydney lost 2.3 percent to 6,978.30. Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 1.6 percent to 26,865.61 and the Shanghai Composite index lost 0.3 percent to 3,030.25. Benchmarks in Jakarta, Taiwan and Thailand fell by more than 1 percent and India's Sensex lost 0.9 percent to 40,804.98.

Japan's markets were closed for a holiday.

China's leaders promised more help for companies and the economy, saying they expect their growth targets can still be reached despite the outbreak.

At a news conference Feb. 24, finance and planning officials said they are looking at how to channel aid to businesses after President Xi Jinping publicly promised over the past week to ensure farming and other industries recover quickly.

The government is looking at "targeted tax reduction," interest rate cuts and payments to poor and virus-hit areas, said an assistant finance minister, Ou Wenhan.

"We will do a good job of implementing large-scale interest rate reduction and tax deferral and ensure effective implementation as soon as possible," said Ou.

The viral outbreak that began in China has infected more than 79,000 people globally and killed more than 2,600 people. China has reported 2,592 deaths among 77,150 cases on the mainland.

Another large jump in new cases was reported in South Korea on Feb. 24, a day after the the president called for "unprecedented, powerful" steps to combat the outbreak that is increasingly confounding attempts to stop the spread.

The 161 new cases bring South Korea's total to 763 cases, and two more deaths raise its toll to seven.

Hopes that the outbreak had been contained were premature, Mizuho Bank said in a commentary, "And indeed, fears of secondary infections proliferating outside of China have come home to roost, sending risk assets in a tailspin and a wave of refuge-seeking into safe-haven."

Stocks fell and bond prices jumped Feb. 21 on Wall Street amid signs the viral outbreak is weighing on U.S. companies.

The S&P 500 fell 1.1 percent to 3,337. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.8 percent to 28,992. The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks gave up 1.1 percent, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq lost 1.8 percent to 9,576.

Technology companies, which have much greater exposure to China than other industries, fell the most. Chipmakers, which rely heavily on China for both sales and supply chains, were some of the worst hit. Advanced Micro Devices slid 7 percent, while Nvidia fell 5.6 percent.

Data from IHS Markit show U.S. manufacturing and business activity slowed in February from the previous month, coming in below analysts' expectations.

Travel restrictions, business closures and other efforts in China aimed at containing the spread of the virus have begun to disrupt supply chains and sales prospects for Apple and other big companies.

Companies that depend on consumer spending, especially in travel-related industries, also fell broadly. Marriott International shed 2.7 percent and Carnival fell 1.8 percent. American Airlines dropped 3.2 percent. General Motors lost 2.2 percent and other automakers slipped

as the virus hurts auto sales in China

The yield on the 30-year Treasury has dipped to record lows as investors sought the safety of U.S. government bonds. It fell to a record low of 1.886 percent, according to Tradeweb, from 1.98 percent late Feb. 20.

The yield on the more closely followed 10-year Treasury was at 1.47 percent. That yield, which is a benchmark for mortgages and other kinds of loans, was close to 1.90 percent at the start of this year.

The price of gold also rose, surging \$17.60 to \$1,666.20 per ounce.

Expectations have been building among traders that the Federal Reserve will need to cut interest rates this year to help the economy.

They're pricing in a 90 percent probability of at least one cut this year, up from an 85 percent probability a week ago and a 58 percent probability about a month ago.

GM Sells Off the Company's European Propulsion Facility

Punch Group has acquired GM's propulsion engineering center in Turin.

The transaction between the two companies includes an engineering services agreement to support GM's global product programs through the end of 2021 was formally revealed to the public on Feb. 27.

The agreement ensures the ongoing viability of the engineering center and employment of its workforce, said GM spokeswoman Lauren Langille. Punch Group plans to reposition the company with developments for new market segments while continuing to provide engineering services to GM.

Since 2005, Turin served as a global center of excellence for diesel propulsion systems and electronics for GM, Langille said.

"This addition to our global portfolio will help the Punch Group execute our vision to be the leading integrator and manufacturer of driveline solutions," said Punch Group Founder and CEO Guido Dumarey. "The focus of this business will be to deliver world-class engineering services to GM and new clients. This includes developing engine applications for new segments, supporting the manufacturing of engines, and providing both engine and transmission solutions in markets worldwide."

"Our skilled workforce in mechanical and electronic engineering, combined with our agile mindset, positions us well to propel and grow this business into the future," said Pierpaolo Antonioli, managing director of the engineering center.

For GM, the agreement is intended to ensure the continuity of engineering services on key GM programs, as the company continues to transform and consolidate its global engineering organization.

"We wanted the best solution for our employees and our company – the transfer of ownership to Punch Group, in addition to an engineering services agreement, does just that," said Doug Parks, executive vice president, GM. "The work will continue to support our global operations and allow us to focus our internal efforts on long-term solutions."

Ford is Expanding Its Spin Subsidiary Internationally

Spin, the micro-mobility unit of Ford Motor Company that crafted the first stationless micro-mobility permit in the United States of America, is going international.

The company will launch its first international fleet of dockless electric scooters in Cologne, Germany this Spring, with other German cities soon to follow, said Spin spokeswoman Christine Yeo. To further bolster its presence internationally, Spin will apply for the upcoming Paris e-scooter share permit in France next month and will explore opportunities in the United Kingdom including private partnerships and pending e-scooter share trials.

With over 20 exclusive partnerships in the United States of America, Spin is a partner to over 60 cities and 25 universities, developing a long-term affordable and reliable alternative to commuting for communities, Yeo said.

Through its Partnership Promise, Spin works closely with local governments to obtain permission prior to entering new markets, and scaling its fleet responsibly. Spin also works with private companies, advocacy and local community groups to create a genuine transportation solution that addresses the needs and challenges of each city and college campus.

"We believe that community integration is integral to our long-term success. That's why we have local teams dedicated to listening to the people in the communities we operate, gathering feedback so that we can offer the best service possible," said Euwyn Poon, Co-Founder and President of Spin. "Last year, we increased the number of U.S. cities in which we operate by 600 percent. We look forward to working collaboratively with cities and universities throughout Europe to bring the joyful,

safe, and seamless Spin experience to the international community."

Since joining the Ford family in November 2018, Spin and Ford have partnered to scale the business in new markets, successfully run operations, and offer a sustainable and genuine transportation solution that will allow a mass of commuters to freely move in gridlock and urban environments, and explore the world around them, Yeo said.

Earlier this year, Spin announced its plans to heavily invest in product and infrastructure projects that will contribute to scooter-sharing sustainable mobility.

The company has installed hundreds of Spin charging Hubs across the U.S.A. that address major issues such as scooter clutter and accessibility of scooters.

"We are thrilled to reach this major milestone for our company," said Derrick Ko, Co-Founder and CEO at Spin. "As the company that created the first policy framework for regulating stationless micromobility, we look forward to collaborating with our constituents in Europe to shape the future of this industry."

"Being part of Ford helps us to offer long-term commitments to our partners as well as infrastructure investments such as Spin Hubs charging stations and multimodal lanes. We are looking forward to expanding our services to Europe where cities are committed to making sustainable, safe, and people-centered transportation options work through regulatory frameworks and infrastructure investments."

Since its acquisition by Ford in November 2018, Spin's team has grown significantly from 24 employees to over 600 employees, Yeo said. The company is currently hiring in Germany for local corporate and fleet operation positions.



General Motors has sold its Turin, Italy-based propulsion center to the Belgium-based Punch Group.

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Woman Celebrates GM’s Local History

MILTON, Wis. (AP) – Dona Dutcher’s office at Blackhawk Community Credit Union is a small glimpse into bold plans to remember the history of auto-making in Rock County.

She has piles of photographs, hubcaps and a mannequin wearing a pair of coveralls with employee number 40-19-10414.

There are bricks from the General Motors Assembly smokestack, a place setting from the executive dining room, a nameplate from a 307 Chevrolet and United Auto Workers Local 95 campaign buttons touting Jim “Boz” Bosben, Terry Meyer, Mike Sheridan and Archie Bailey.

In the basement of the credit union, two separate rooms, one of them a vault, hold frayed and fragile blueprints of GM buildings, reports from a transportation company GM used to haul vehicles from the plant to dealers, postcards, tools and *Janesville Gazette* newspapers documenting the strike of 1937.

“I’ve got a lot of stuff, as you can see,” Dutcher recently told the Wisconsin State Journal.

And it’s only a fraction of her collection.

Dutcher has other storage facilities in Milton, Janesville and Beloit that hold larger items such as industrial fans, three-wheeled bikes used to get around the plant, handrails, carts, welding equipment and cabinets full of tools. She even has lights from the parking lot, multiple fire hydrants and three flagpoles.

And sometime in 2021 the artifacts will come under one roof in downtown Janesville.

That’s where the credit union will open a Legacy Center in the former First National Bank building that was constructed in 1913 at the corner of Main and River streets.

Dutcher, a manager of the

credit union’s Milton branch – and whose husband, Brad Dutcher, started working at GM in 1986 and is a former president of UAW Local 95 – has worked for the credit union since 2002 and doesn’t consider the Legacy Center a museum. Instead, it will be more interactive. Beyond the exhibits, it will include educational programs and research facilities and be a place for reflection and remembrance of an industry that touched nearly every aspect of Janesville and provided good-paying jobs to generations of families.

“GM was just so connected to the veins of this community,” Dona Dutcher said.

The need for a place to take in the history of Rock County auto-making became apparent after years of hearing from former employees, and after 1,200 workers there lost their jobs when production of Chevrolet Suburban and Tahoe and GMC Yukon sport utility vehicles ended just before Christmas 2008. The Isuzu truck line closed the following April, ending the jobs of the remaining 110 employees. Another 800 or so employees of a long list of GM suppliers and contracted transport companies also were put out of work over the succeeding months.

In 1990, GM employed 5,100 people in Janesville. At its peak in 1978, the sprawling plant on the city’s south side had more than 7,100 employees.

So when it came time to remodel the Milwaukee Street branch of the credit union, where Dutcher was working a few years ago, she started looking at ways in which historical items could be displayed in the branch. Her board of directors, however, began thinking about something more that just a few historical photos and signs.

They initially considered combining the Legacy Center with a new corporate headquarters but when plans for the site along the river fell through, the credit union purchased the former Moose Lodge in the city for its headquarters and the First National Bank building last summer for the Legacy Center, located in the midst of a downtown that is undergoing massive redevelopment.

“It is important to us that our expansion plans continue to contribute to Janesville’s overall redevelopment strategy,” Sherri Strumpf, the credit union’s CEO, said when she announced the plans. “We are excited that this will not only return a building to

its historical significance, but it will make a great backdrop for a museum that honors the men and women and families and friends of General Motors and the UAW.”

The history of GM in Janesville dates back to 1918, when the company branched out into farm vehicles by buying the Samson Tractor Co. Within 12 months after the purchase, nearly 150 tractors per day were rolling off the production line. Car production at the Janesville plant began in 1923, but the Great Depression shuttered the plant from 1932 to 1934. The plant made 16 million 105 mm artillery shells during World War II and then returned to automotive production after the war.

“GM was
just so connected
to the veins
of this
community.”
– Donna Dutcher,
Blackhawk Community
Credit Union

It’s only fitting that Blackhawk Community Credit Union is creating the Legacy Center to pay homage to GM and the other companies created in the city because of GM’s presence. The credit union was formed in 1965 with employees of the Fisher Body Division of GM and office employees of UAW Local 95. Today, the credit union has 12 branches, over 60,000 members and over \$600 million in assets.

But it’s safe to say that Dutcher’s office at the Milton branch that opened last fall is the only one that resembles a museum.

She has archival software on her computer and is always pursuing garage sales, thrift stores and auctions for anything related to auto-making in Rock County. She also gets a steady stream of phone calls and emails from former workers or the families of former employees offering up memorabilia.

Dutcher has collected identification badges for some of the 153 GM employees who worked at a temporary production facility at the yearlong Century of Progress International Exposition, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair, in 1933.

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CHEVROLET

February Auto Sales Weak

February – like January before it – is known to be a weak month for vehicle sales, and this year should be no different, said Cox spokesman Mark Schirmer.

According to a forecast released by Cox Automotive, new light-vehicle sales volume is expected to rise nearly 6 percent compared to last February and 16 percent compared to last month. With leap year providing an extra selling day – 25 this year versus 24 last year, the gain is less impressive. After incorporating seasonal adjustments, the sales pace is expected to rise just slightly, from 16.5 million in February 2019 to 16.6 million this year.

According to Charlie Chesbrough, senior economist with Cox Automotive: “We’ve settled at a slower pace over the last few months, and our expectation is the new pace will continue this month and through 2020. We are in the late stage of the sales cycle, and demand is weakening even though incentives are relatively high.”

There are upside and downside risks to the forecast this

month as sales in February can be greatly influenced by many factors, including harsh winter weather.

Extreme weather can impact vehicle sales in winter months as shopping on dealership lots becomes more difficult, and cold, gray climate conditions do not support buyer excitement. Thus far, this February has not seen massive snowstorms or cold across much of the country, and these mild conditions should support healthy vehicle sales. However, another risk to the vehicle market remains credit availability, particularly in subprime lending. Auto financing continues to remain strong, but a downturn in the economy will impact credit availability.

The record for February occurred in 2000, at the peak of the dot-com bubble when sales reached 1.5 million vehicles, and the seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) was 18.9 million. Exceeding this record is not expected this February as there is little stimulus from either the economy or the market that would lift the sales pace to this level.



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