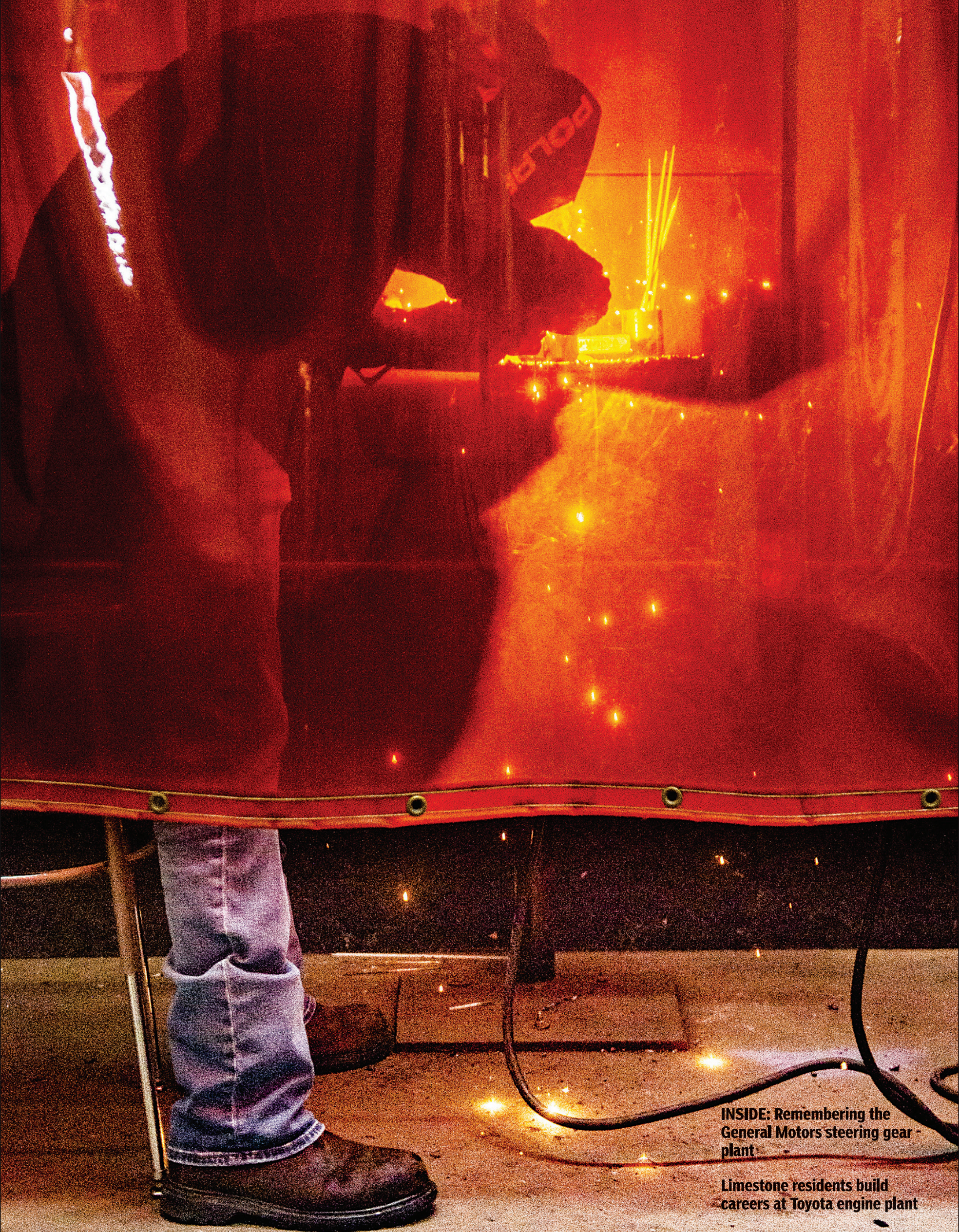




# The Decatur Daily

## SPARKING A NEW ERA

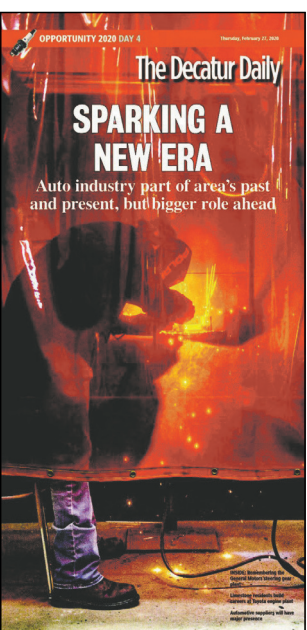
Auto industry part of area's past  
and present, but bigger role ahead



**INSIDE:** Remembering the  
General Motors steering gear  
plant

Limestone residents build  
careers at Toyota engine plant

Automotive suppliers will have  
major presence



# CCI first supplier to locate in Lawrence County

28-employee plant to supply Mazda Toyota with auto fluids

By Michael Wetzel  
Staff Writer

MOULTON — CCI Manufacturing USA Corp., an automotive fluid producer, is the first direct supplier to Mazda Toyota that has located in Lawrence County.

The Lawrence County Industrial Development Board announced in January that the Japanese-based company would bring 28 jobs and will be offering jobs averaging an estimated \$50,000 annually, according to IDB documents.

CCI will locate its facility on the south side of Jack Daniel Cooperage in the Mallard Fox West Industrial Park in the Trinity-annexed area of Lawrence County.

Dan Aloia, CCI's vice president, said the company will produce and deliver fluids such as engine coolant and brake fluid to the megaplan in the Greenbrier region of Limestone County. He said the company plans to invest \$21.5 million in its Lawrence location including a plant consisting of 60,000 to 80,000 square feet.

Aloia said CCI's factory in Lemont, Illinois, southwest of Chicago,



Mazda Toyota supplier CCI will locate on the south side of Jack Daniel Cooperage in the Mallard Fox West Industrial Park in the Trinity-annexed area of Lawrence County. [DECATUR DAILY FILE]

will supply fluids to Mazda Toyota until the Lawrence County facility in the Mallard Fox West Industrial Park is fully operational in 2023.

"The Lawrence County plant will be a direct supplier to Mazda Toyota and other automotive plants across the South, including Toyota in Alabama," he said.

He said CCI likes Lawrence County's central location and the ability to communicate and transport with the railroad.

"We will be installing rail spurs to ship our goods," he said. "The

## More Information

**CCI Manufacturing USA Corp.**

**Location:** Mallard Fox West Industrial Park in Lawrence County. Facility will be on the south side of Jack Daniel Cooperage.

**Investment:** \$21.5 million

**Projected jobs:** 28

**Site size:** 60,000 to 80,000 square feet.



A CCI official said the company likes Lawrence County's central location and the ability to communicate and transport with the railroad. This photo shows a railroad crossing at the Mallard Fox West Industrial Complex, where CCI will locate.

county's incentives and the availability of a trained workforce in the area" were positives, he added.

He said CCI has a long-standing history of supplying Japanese automakers.

IDB President and CEO Tabitha Pace said the board gave CCI tax abatements of all state and local non-educational property taxes for 10 years.

Non-educational construction related sales and use taxes also will be abated, the agreement said.

County Commission Chairman Bobby Burch and County Administrator Heather Dyar said the abatements will pay off in

the long run.

Founded in 1949, the company also has a presence in Germany, Mexico and Brazil.

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## About this section

The automotive industry is nothing new for the Decatur area. GM operated a plant here from the 1970s until 2009.

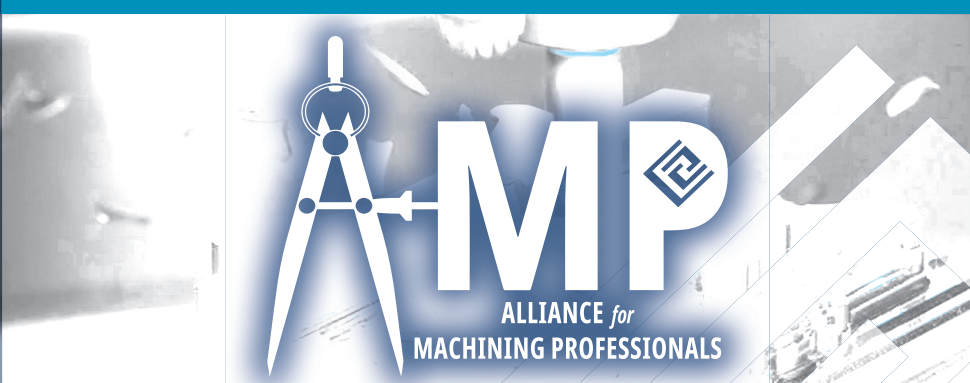
But a new era of auto production is underway as construction continues on plants for Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA, which will eventually have 4,000 employees, and its suppliers, who've announced plans to hire 1,700 workers.

Today's Opportunity section looks at local residents who have worked in the auto industry or are doing so now. It also takes a deeper look at the suppliers who've announced they'll put operations in this area.

**On the cover:** Decatur City Schools student Trey Jenkins welds in a booth at Global Tech Institute, which provides a site for the school system's current welding program.

Cover photo by Dan Busey and design by Leah Daniels/THE DECATUR DAILY

## ADVANCED MACHINE TOOL CURRICULUM | PAID WORK EXPERIENCE



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# I-565 widening to finish this year or early in 2021

By Michael Wetzel  
Staff Writer

Several state road projects are in various stages to help with transportation of workers and materials to the new Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant. They include:

- widening of Interstate 565 from the I-65 interchange east to the edge of Madison County,
- four-laning Huntsville Brownsferry Road between U.S. 31 and I-65 in Tanner, and
- improvements at the I-565 Greenbrier Road interchange.

The Alabama Department of Transportation hopes to open bids on the project to widen I-565 in late April, according to Seth Burkett, a department spokesman.

ALDOT is "aiming for getting it completed within 2020 or by early 2021," he said.

The gradually increasing gas tax that began with a 6-cent rise last year will help pay for two of the local projects.

"The \$17 million resurfacing and six-laning (of I-565) between I-65 and County Line Road is one of two major projects in this area to be funded by Gov. Kay Ivey's first-year plan for Rebuild Alabama," Burkett said. "The other is the estimated \$27 million



Officials hope the widening of I-565 to help with traffic flow is completed by the end of this year or early in 2021. [DAN BUSEY/DECATUR DAILY]

four-laning of Huntsville Brownsferry Road from U.S. 31 to I-65, which includes multiple bridge replacements, widening of the overpass at I-65, and interchange improvements at Exit 347.

"We face an enormous backlog of needed capacity projects in Alabama, so our area is fortunate to receive such an infusion for infrastructure at a time when it is needed more than ever," he said.

Burkett said the I-565 widening project extends about 6 miles.

Bid opening for the Huntsville Brownsferry Road project is scheduled for July, he said.

Another major project, which will be complete this year, is the \$10.3 million reconfiguration of the eastbound I-565 ramps to

and from Greenbrier Road, Burkett said.

"That project should wrap up this spring, just whenever the weather gets good enough for them to do the OGFC paving on the main line (of I-565)."

Open ground friction course pavement allows water to drain through its structure more easily than standard asphalt.

He said ALDOT is working with municipalities to improve roadways near the Mazda Toyota plant under construction in Limestone County, especially the ongoing construction of Greenbrier Parkway and improvements to Old Alabama 20.

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## OPPORTUNITY 2020

WELDING, OTHER SKILLS A TOP PRIORITY



Antonio Nava-Flores watches through his hood as Anthony Romero, not pictured, welds inside a booth at Global Tech Institute earlier this year. Decatur City Schools' welding program has had room for only 20 students, but the system plans to spend almost \$1 million to start a welding program at the Career Academies of Decatur that could accommodate as many as 120 students. [DAN BUSEY/DECATUR DAILY]

# Decatur area schools expanding career technical programs

By Deangelo McDaniel  
Staff Writer

A \$1 million investment Decatur City Schools is making in a welding program is the latest effort of Decatur-area school system to make sure a qualified workforce is available for jobs at the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA facility and suppliers associated with the plant.

"To say this plant has changed how we look at technical education would be an understatement," Hartselle City Superintendent Dee Dee Jones said.

It's not just jobs the \$1.6 billion plant in Huntsville-annexed Limestone County will provide, it's everything following the plant, said superintendents Michael Douglas of Decatur City and Bill Hopkins Jr. of Morgan County.

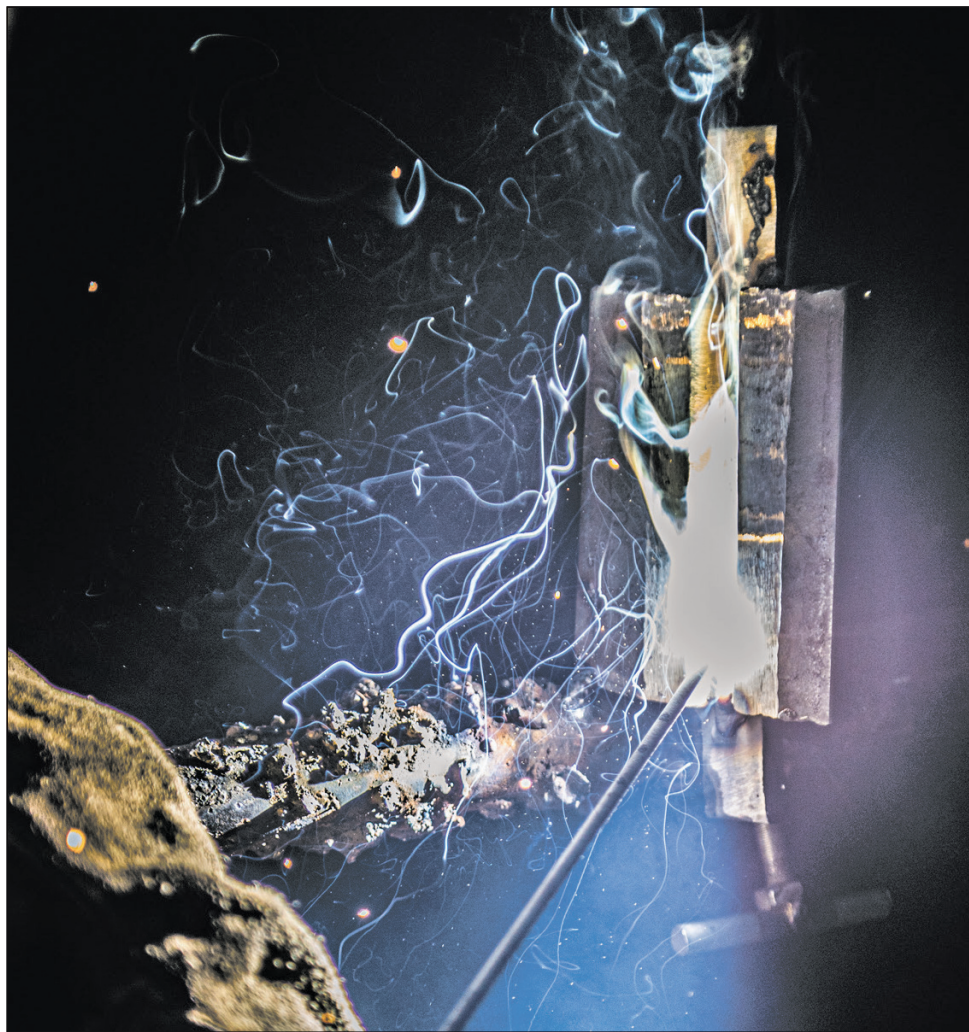
"We already had a mandate from the state to make sure every student graduates either ready for college or a career," said Hopkins, whose system invested almost \$1 million into revamping the district's Morgan County Technology Park at Brewer High.

"We're even under more pressure now because of all the growth in North Alabama," he added.

Before Mazda Toyota picked Greenbrier for its location, Douglas said DCS was already looking at expanding its welding program because student demand was high and other industrial leaders "talked to us about the need for welders."

Decatur students currently take welding classes at the Global Tech Institute in Decatur and 20 slots are available, 10 each for students at Decatur and Austin.

But the \$1 million investment to start a welding program at the Career Academies of Decatur, which is at the old Austin High, will provide space for as many as 120 students, Douglas said.



Austin High junior Luke Massey welds inside a booth at Global Tech Institute, where Decatur City Schools students currently learn the skill. [DAN BUSEY/DECATUR DAILY]

coach at Decatur's academy, said they rerouted about 60 students last year who wanted to be in welding to other programs "because we didn't have the space."

Cushing and DCS career and technical education supervisor Shelton Cobb interviewed every student requesting to be in the program.

"Being welding trained is an advantageous skill and we have too many students on the waiting list," Cushing said. "Every time industrial leaders tour our facility or we meet with them, they talk about the need for welders."

Jeremy Childers, career tech and workforce development director for Morgan County Schools, said the school district has had a welding program since 1973 and that former students are "scattered all over the United States

making good money as welders."

He said barely a month passes that the district doesn't get a call from some company looking for a beginning welder, which generally makes about \$18 per hour.

"Trust me, they won't be at \$18 per hour long," Childers said.

Hartselle students have access to welding classes through a dual enrollment program with Calhoun Community College.

"We've had this arrangement since 2014 and we have about 20 students per year in the program," Jones said.

Mazda Toyota's arrival has Decatur-area school systems expanding how they deliver career technical education in just about every area.

The plant's opening — slated for 2021 — will create a huge demand for skilled

labor, and a significant number of the jobs will not require four-year college degrees, Morgan County Economic Development Association President Jeremy Nails said.

This means Mazda Toyota, which plans to employ 4,000, will be counting on school systems to supply some of the plant's workers, Nails said.

Suppliers to the plant are expected to bring several thousand more jobs to the area.

### Decatur hopes to add more programs

In addition to welding, Douglas said DCS is looking to open two additional bays for automotive mechanics and expanding general maintenance offerings so that students can graduate with certifications in trades such as electrical and plumbing.

"We believe in what

we're already doing, but when a plant has specific needs, we have to meet those needs because every student is not going to college," Douglas said.

Jamie Hall, a project manager and adviser for production hiring at Mazda Toyota, said recently that 3,000 of the 4,000 jobs will be production team leaders and team members.

To fill the positions, Hall said, the plant will need 40,000 applicants because only 7% to 10% "will actually pass our process."

"We are aware of the challenges of getting students ready for a job and we have been for years," Hopkins said.

Mazda Toyota elevated the challenge, "because it's not just jobs in their plant, but jobs suppliers are generating," he said.

Nails said a big change since Mazda Toyota picked north Alabama for its assembly plant is employers and educators have gotten on the same page, and students now understand they can have great careers in the Decatur area without four-year degrees.

"This is a major shift in thinking," he said.

Nails said school systems know what industry is expecting and have ramped up career technical education that will allow students to graduate and obtain gainful employment.

"A student may not be good at English or plan to get a four-year degree, but that student can make a good living in the area with the proper certification or with a two-year degree," he said.

After meeting with Mazda Toyota officials last a year ago, Jones said, Hartselle added programs that will allow students to graduate with Manufacturing Skill Standards Council certification.

MSSC is an industry-led nonprofit that provides national standards for training and certification, offering entry-level and more experienced workers an opportunity to acquire

skills they need to work in a manufacturing sector that's no longer "grit and grind," school leaders said.

"They told us every employee needs this certification," Jones said, adding that the state in 2012 put in place a directive requiring school systems to make sure every graduate is ready for college or a career.

### Athens City Schools

In Athens City, the school district has formed a partnership with Drake State Community and Technical College that will allow students to graduate with MSSC certification.

"The 21st century jobs are technology driven," said Gia Russell, who handles career technical education for Athens City. "We're having to integrate what these students need into our curriculum."

She said Athens City also has implemented the state's Ready to Work program, which is operated by the Alabama Community College System, and teaches a set of standards business and industry leaders say employers need.

John Seymour, president of the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, said he's not surprised at the challenges school systems are facing as the manufacturing sector heats up.

About 20 years ago, the chamber commissioned a report that identified 25% of the jobs in Morgan County as being in manufacturing. He said there has always been a challenge in the Decatur area to provide a specialized workforce and training for workers.

Hopkins, too, said he has been aware of the challenge.

"We're a rural school system, so we've always had a big need to prepare students for jobs that don't require college degrees," he said.

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**OPPORTUNITY 2020**

# GM plant allowed Greene to stay in Decatur area

**By Deangelo McDaniel**  
Staff Writer

Ed Greene was accepting his chemistry degree from Bethune-Cookman University in Florida in 1974 when General Motors opened a parts division in the Decatur area.

Greene didn't know it at the time, but the automotive part would eventually play a major role in his life.

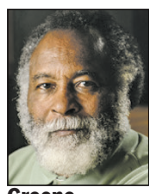
So it was a sad time for him when the plant — by then called Delphi — closed

in 2009, but he was “at the same time thankful because the plant gave me an opportunity to get back into the workforce.”

The plant had helped Greene, 71, stayed in the Decatur area. “I’ll always be grateful for that,” he said.

Greene, who was born in Winter Park, Florida, and currently resides in Somerville, moved to Decatur in 1974 when he got a job in engineering and research with

Monsanto. He and his wife, Brinda, of 43 years, had been married a little more than two years and had three children when he got laid off at Monsanto. Greene said the family didn't want to leave the area because his wife's foster mother lived in Morgan County.



Greene

He said he applied for a

salaried position with GM, but “it was a bad economy for engineers looking for a job” and he had no luck. Greene submitted a second application and was hired as an hourly forklift driver in 1984. A year later, he was moved to manufacturing supervisor.

“I could have gotten a job outside of this area, but the GM plant allowed me to stay, and I'm thankful,” Greene said.

He worked at the plant until 2004, when

he transferred to the GM assembly plant in Doraville, Georgia. Shortly after arriving at the Georgia facility, Greene said he realized he had been suffering three years from Pernicious anemia, which is a deficiency in red blood cells caused by lack of vitamin B12 in the blood.

After being on disability for more than two years, he said he retired in 2006 with GM before the company made its parts division a separate

company. Greene and his wife continue to live in the area and the four children — two at Decatur and two from Brewer High — graduated from schools in Morgan County.

“GM helped me and my family, and I'm sure a lot of others benefited from the plant as well,” he said.

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**AUTO INDUSTRY ROOTS**

# Timeline for Saginaw/Delphi in area



This photo shows the view from the south in about 1982 of the GM plant across U.S. 31 from Calhoun Community College in Limestone County. Former buildings 22 and 23 on the northern end of the site are now part of Carpenter Technology. Claborn Manufacturing is renovating the former Building No. 21 on the southern end of the former GM property. Claborn will use about 110,000 square feet of the space, and another 110,000 square feet will be leased to a tenant, the company has said. [DECATUR DAILY FILE]

The Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant under construction in Limestone County isn't the Decatur area's first link to the automotive industry. GM broke ground in 1974 on a plant to produce steering system gears and other equipment.

The plant, located across U.S. 31 from Calhoun Community College, operated until 2009, and many of its former employees still reside in the area.

Following is a timeline of the plant's history.

**1974:** Groundbreaking on first Limestone County plant.

**1975:** Plant 21 opened. It produces rack-and-pinion gears and pumps.

**December 1975:** Plant produces its first hydraulic steering gear pump.

**January 1977:** Union organizers make inroads.

**May 1977:** GM breaks ground on second Limestone plant.

**August 1977:** Plant is producing 5,200 power-steering pumps a day and employs 750.

**1980:** Plant 23 opens. It produces halfshafts, power-steering hoses and tie rods.

**January 1980:** Plant has 1,670 employees.

**June 1980:** Employees vote against UAW representation, 714-661.

**October 1981:** Gov. George Wallace, State Reps. Tommy Carter and Tommy Ed Roberts and Decatur Mayor Bill Dukes deny fact that plants are hiring from outside the area. Contract with UAW requires GM to hire employees laid off from other plants.

**July 1981:** Plants have 1,900 employees.

**December 1981:** GM to close 21 plants, but Limestone County plants safe.

**1982:** Hit with recession and declining auto sales, plants lay off several hundred employees.

**September 1982:** Employees approve UAW as bargaining representative.

**November 1982:** Plants employ 1,700.

**1986:** Employment peaks at 4,200.

**1990s:** Strikes at plants in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana frequently affect Limestone County plants due to union involvement.

Many strikes involve protests against GM efforts to move production overseas. UAW argues GM is underinvesting in domestic plants.

**December 1991:** Plants have

3,200 employees.

**December 1992:** GM announces it will close Plant 22. No layoffs take place, and the plants employ 3,400.

**1993:** Plants employ 3,000.

**1994:** GM closes Plant 22.

**1995:** GM renames Saginaw parts division as Delphi Automotive, leading many to suspect a sale or spinoff is in the works.

**November 1997:** GM invests \$20 million in Plant 21.

**1998:** Plants have 3,300 employees.

**August 1998:** After settling a two-month strike, GM announces it will spin off Delphi as a separate, publicly traded corporation. Main goal, it says, is to expand customer base. Eighty percent of Limestone plants' business is with GM.

**May 1999:** GM spins off Delphi stock at \$17 per share.

**September 2002:** State purchases, for \$10.8 million, Plant 22 and 121 acres from Delphi to avoid loss of 2,700 jobs. In return, Delphi agrees to invest \$22 million in equipment.

**January 2003:** Delphi places Limestone facility in its Automotive Holdings

Group, a group for underperforming businesses.

**Oct. 8, 2005:** Delphi declares a reorganization bankruptcy.

**Oct. 28, 2005:** Bankruptcy to cut new-hire wages from \$14 to \$9, others from \$27 to \$10.50.

**November 2005:** Internal memo lists seven plants Delphi may close, but local plants not on list. Plants have 2,000 employees.

**April 2006:** Delphi announces it may close Limestone plants in January 2008 if it does not find a buyer.

**December 2006:** Delphi announces it will build halfshaft plant in China.

**June 2007:** Local union approves contract that would close local plants. Members deem closure — which includes buyouts — as preferable to leaving issue to bankruptcy court. Plants have 1,175 employees.

**December 2007:** Possible Delphi buyers make clear they would not keep Limestone plants open. Delphi has 1,000 employees.

**July 2008:** Volkswagen picks Chattanooga as assembly site over Limestone County, diminishing Delphi employees' hopes



General Motors Group Vice President Wallace Wilson, left, huddles with Alabama Gov. George Wallace at a Nov. 17, 1973, announcement of GM's plan to build a manufacturing plant four miles north of Decatur. [DECATUR DAILY FILE]

of re-employment within automotive industry.

**February 2009:** Delphi begins successful process of ending health benefits for salaried retirees.

**March 2009:** GM agrees to buy Delphi steering unit, but still plans to close

local plant. Plants have 600 employees, including 250 who predate the 1999 spinoff.

**June 26, 2009:** Production ends at Limestone County plants.

— Eric Fleischauer



**OPPORTUNITY 2020**

GM LIMESTONE COUNTY PLANT

# Job was a dream come true for Goodwin

By Deangelo McDaniel  
Staff Writer

Vaughn Goodwin was two years out of high school when the phone call he had been hoping for came.

"I still think about it every day," he said about the day in 1985 when General Motors called to offer him a job. "If the plant was still there, I'd still be working there."

Goodwin, 53, has been the mayor of Trinity since

**"If the plant was still there, I'd still be working there."**

— Vaughn Goodwin, former General Motors employee and Trinity mayor

2000.

Before the world of politics ever showed up on his radar, however, he was like a lot of teenagers at West Morgan High and the surrounding area.

"We wanted a good job, and we knew the

opportunities GM provided," Goodwin said.

He actually knew better than most because his late father, Larry Goodwin, worked at the GM plant in Limestone County for 27 years until medical issues forced him to retire.

Goodwin's goal of getting a job at GM wasn't immediately fulfilled after he graduated from West Morgan in 1983. He got a job at an auto parts and wrecker company in Trinity after graduation



Goodwin

and was working at Freuhauf on Alabama 20 in Decatur when the call from GM came. Goodwin started as an assembly line worker, but by the time the plant closed in 2009, he had risen to Local UAW president.

He said workers were told two years before the plant shuttered that it

was closing. Still, it was a difficult time going through the exit interviews "because you knew this might be the last time being around good friends who were like family."

Goodwin took a job in the GM factory in Spring Hill, Tennessee, and commuted about two hours each way for five years until he retired in 2015.

He said getting a job with GM in 1985 was "like a dream come true" and being there when the plant

closed was like losing a family member.

"GM was in my blood," Goodwin said.

He said the Limestone County manufacturing facility was good for the Decatur area and everyone who worked there.

"These were some of the best jobs anywhere," he said.

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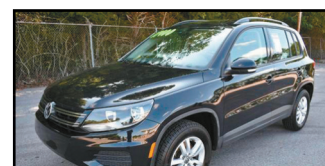
2015 Toyota RAV4  
Stk#158AK  
**\$15,995**

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2007 Chevrolet Tahoe LT  
Stk#291AK  
**\$10,800**

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2017 Volkswagen Tiguan S  
Stk#840K  
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2019 Kia Optima  
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2008 Chevrolet Tahoe Z-71  
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2018 Dodge Challenger SXT  
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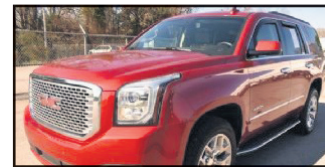
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2016 Cadillac SRX  
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2009 Toyota Venza  
Loaded, Stk#478AK  
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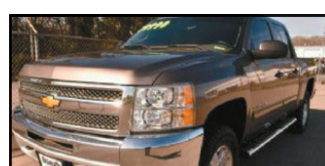
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**\$5,990**

\*For more info text 8RZR to 27414.



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Stk#391  
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2010 Honda CR-V  
Stk#958G  
**\$9,890**

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2011 GMC Terrain  
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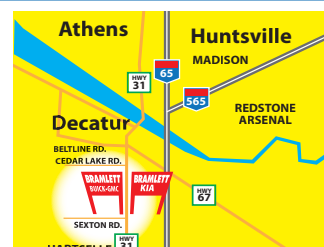
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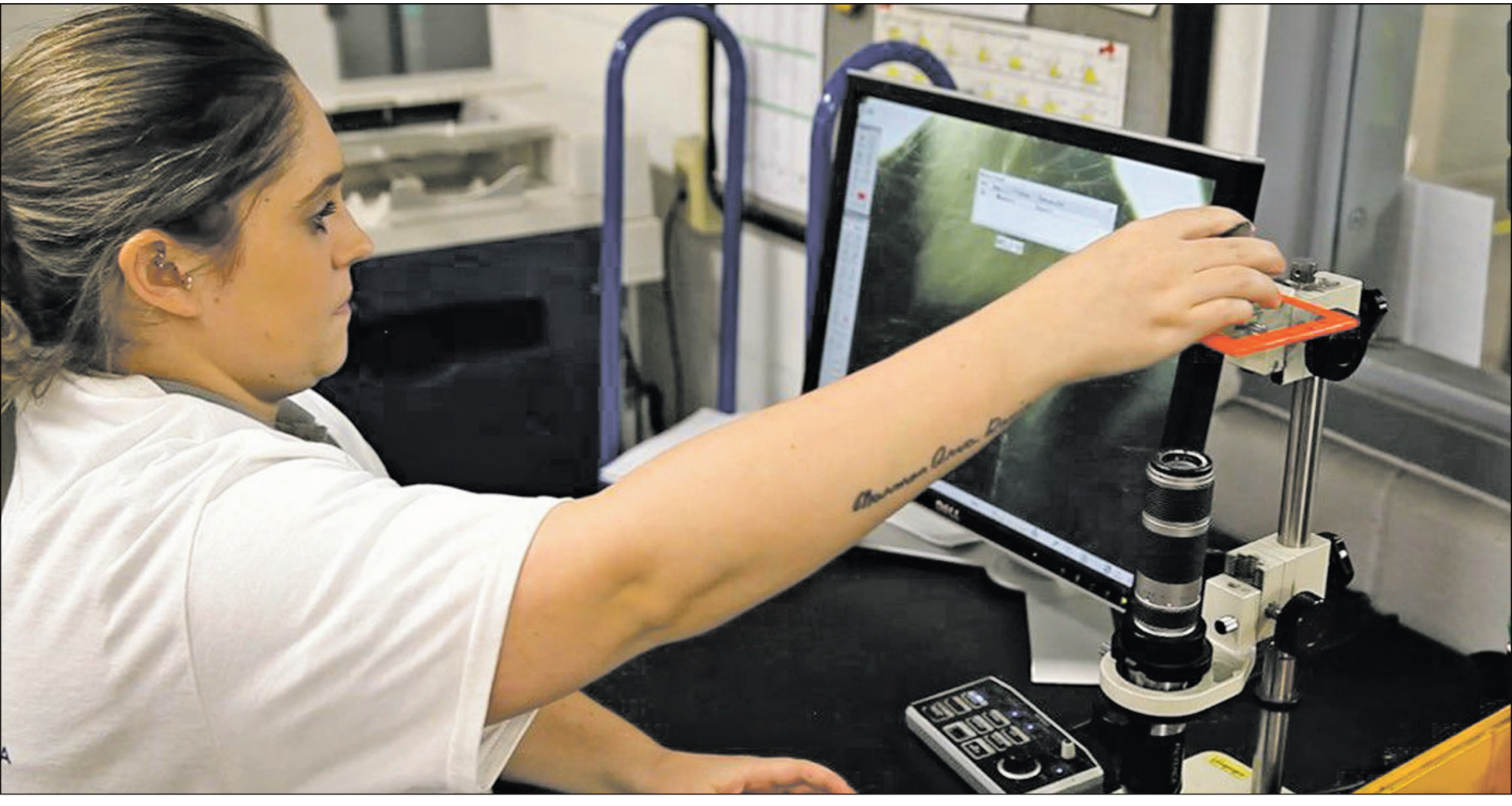
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# OPPORTUNITY 2020



An employee at the Toyotetsu plant in Somerset, Kentucky, performs quality testing. Toyotetsu is one of three Japanese manufacturers involved in the joint venture YKTA, which plans to employ 650 workers eventually at a Limestone County facility. [COURTESY PHOTO]

# With 650 jobs planned, YKTA to have biggest supplier workforce

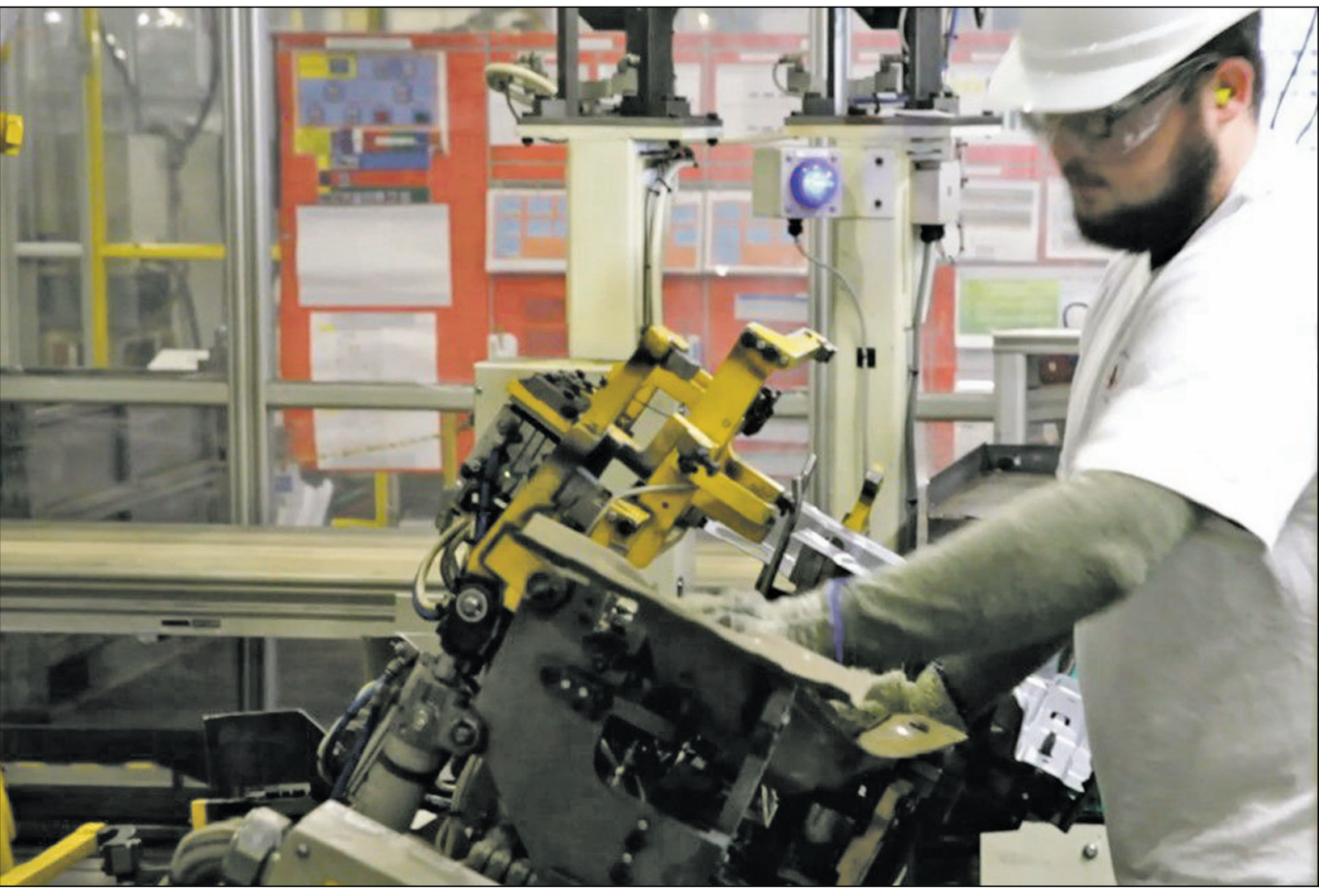
Staff report

A joint venture formed by a trio of Japanese manufacturers plans to have the biggest workforce among automotive suppliers starting operations in Limestone County to serve the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant. Y-tec Keylex Toyotetsu Alabama (YKTA) planned to have 50 employees by the end of January and eventually will create 650 jobs.

The company wanted to start hiring this month "for our machine maintenance and die maintenance," said Jackie Hogan, vice president of administration with YKTA. The company hopes to have 70 employees by May. "Production hiring will start soon also, but will be slow at first and then pick up nearer our planned launch," Hogan said. "We plan to start production in April 2021 with approximately 350-400. We will steadily add team members as we increase production and should reach our peak by summer 2022."

Toyota and Mazda will stagger the startup of their first shifts next year. They'll then stagger the beginning of a second shift, which is why suppliers also will gradually increase production. The YKT Alabama facility will be located on the 2,500-acre site of the Mazda Toyota auto assembly plant now under construction. The YKTA facility will be about 740,000 square feet and use about 52 acres. "We are about 75% under roof at this point," Hogan said. "Our first equipment installation has begun and will continue throughout 2020."

The company is investing \$220 million in the building, equipment and furnishings. YKTA will produce structural body stampings and assemblies, as well as



A worker performs robotic welding at the Toyotetsu plant in Somerset, Kentucky, and similar work will be done at the YKTA facility under construction in Limestone County. [COURTESY PHOTO]



A worker prepares steel coil for stamping at the Toyotetsu plant in Somerset, Kentucky. Toyotetsu is one of three Japanese manufacturers involved in the joint venture YKTA, which will produce structural body stampings and assemblies at a Limestone County facility. [COURTESY PHOTO]



An employee at the Toyotetsu plant in Somerset, Kentucky, operates a stamping press and performs quality checks and packing of metal auto parts. [COURTESY PHOTO]



An employee at the Toyotetsu plant in Somerset, Kentucky, uses a crane to open a stamping die for repair in the die maintenance department. [COURTESY PHOTO]

## The suppliers

**YKTA Alabama**  
**Location:** on the 2,500-acre Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA property in the Greenbrier area of Limestone County  
**Investment:** \$220 million  
**Projected jobs:** 650  
**Site size:** 52 acres  
**Plant size:** 740,000 square feet

chassis parts, for Mazda Toyota.

"We will start with coils of steel and stamp and form the metal into the shapes needed. These parts will then be welded into assemblies and some will be painted," Hogan said. "Specific structural parts of the vehicle body that we produce are B pillars and A pillars for the vehicle, dash panels (and) fender apron. "Chassis parts include

suspension parts."

Job seekers can go directly to the YKTA website at yktal.com or view job postings on AIDT.edu. The Mazda-Toyota partnership is investing \$1.6 billion to build and equip its Huntsville assembly plant, which will have up to 4,000 workers producing up to 300,000 vehicles annually. The company has said the plant will produce a new, unspecified sport

utility vehicle for Toyota and a new Mazda SUV.

The YKTA alliance unites three Japanese suppliers:  
• Y-tec, established in 1945, produces automotive components and designs and manufactures dies, tooling and jigs for Japanese automakers including Toyota.  
• Keylex, established in 1924, specializes in vehicle body parts, produces dies

and jigs, and designs and installs production equipment. Its major customer is Mazda, and the company operates a joint venture with Y-tec in Mexico.  
• Toyotetsu, established in 1946, is primarily a Toyota supplier and has North American operations in Kentucky, Texas, Canada, and Mexico. These plants produce structural parts such as pillars, arms and beams as well as functional parts such as pedals



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# Workforce development must include focus on 'backfill' jobs

By Eric Fleischauer  
Metro Editor

The importance of workforce training for an auto assembly plant comes as no surprise, but economic development officials dealing with the combined blessing and challenge of the Mercedes-Benz plant said training workers for the "backfill" jobs is just as important.

Jim Page, chairman of the Tuscaloosa-based Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and for nine years vice president of public policy and business development for the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, said Mercedes-Benz U.S. International in Tuscaloosa County is the go-to employer for much of west Alabama because of its premium wages, benefits and reputation.

"If employees of other businesses, whether suppliers or other businesses in this community, have an opportunity to improve their work conditions, they're going to. That's great for Mercedes, but you then have to backfill those jobs from the companies and businesses that they came from," Page said.

Translating that to north Alabama, many skilled employees from Decatur industries may end up at Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA. Absent careful planning and workforce development, the flow of employees to Mazda Toyota could hurt productivity at existing plants.

"It's not a bad thing," stressed Page, "it just requires constant attention and constant effort. Our organization, for example, houses the regional workforce development operation in west Alabama (West Alabama Works). We've got a full-time team that wakes up every day focused on that issue like a laser. They not only try to create a long-term pipeline for those jobs, starting in elementary school, but also try to plug the leaks that may happen with our smaller businesses as a result of new industries and businesses coming to town."

Small businesses are



Hector Caceres gathers his equipment at the end of welding class at Global Tech Institute in Decatur recently. Decatur City Schools has room for only 20 students in its welding program that Global Tech provides space for, but the school system plans to spend \$1 million to expand the program by putting it at the Career Academies of Decatur. The city school system has emphasized its Career Academies of Decatur because of growing recognition statewide that students need to be ready to attend college or join the workforce. [DAN BUSEY/DECATUR DAILY]. [DAN BUSEY/DECATUR DAILY]

the most vulnerable to the massive workforce transition that comes with an auto assembly plant, and they are thus a focus of workforce development efforts in west Alabama.

"The training is constantly evolving to meet those needs, to always make sure we're backfilling and not letting any small businesses suffer because of successful economic development recruitment efforts," Page said.

"Obviously you'll see the same thing in north Alabama, not just with Mazda Toyota but all the other new jobs coming to the area. There's always a certain impact on the small businesses. We just can't ever lose sight of that. We always have to make sure we're helping to backfill those jobs."

## Workforce development starts early

Bryan Chandler, interim director of Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority, said the benefits to north Alabama

of land- ing Mazda Toyota will be pro- found, but the chal- lenges of main- tain- ing the labor force are significant.

"There's no question that it will strain some resources, particularly the labor force," Chandler said. "Providing the work- force and working with the companies to make sure they have stable employ- ees, that will be a challenge and I'm sure they already know that."

"It's a good challenge to have, but they should expect that challenge."

He said West Alabama Works begins its efforts as early as pre-kindergarten, trying to make sure a pre- pared labor force graduates from high school, technical school and college.

Steve Sewell, executive vice president of Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, joined that organization a year after



Chandler



Sewell

Mercedes announced it would locate in Tuscaloosa County.

While he agrees with Page and Chandler that workforce development is a challenge, he said that challenge is more man- ageable in 2020 than it was when Mercedes — the state's first auto assembly plant — landed in Tusca- loosa County.

"I'd say we're in a much different position here 27 years later in terms of the experience level in the state and infrastructure in the state to support a project of this magnitude," Sewell said. "That's one of the benefits of success, of having multiple automak- ers and other major global companies here, is that we're a state now that has done this."

Sewell's involvement with Mazda Toyota gives him confidence that the challenge of workforce development will be met.

"You've got a north Alabama region that's planning for it. I think the leadership there has a really good plan in place. They understand the needs and demands of this kind of project, and they understand the role they're going to play in helping the company achieve its objec- tives," he said.

Sewell joined his col- leagues in warning that one of the most important workforce development missions must be directed not at the needs of Mazda Toyota, but at other employers who will lose employees to the plant.

"It creates an oppor- tunity for backfill for people who may be working in low- wage positions right now. That old adage is absolutely true, that the rising tide lifts all boats. It's very positive in terms of that kind of impact, but it does create challenges that you have to account for," he said. "The back- fill jobs are going to be extraordinarily impor- tant because you want to

take care of your existing industries."

The challenge of work- force development is in part making sure that the labor force, and students in the pipeline toward being a part of that labor force, understand what employ- ment opportunities are available.

"And that's another difference from where we were in 1993," Sewell said. "Today we have, I'm con- vinced, the best workforce development system we've ever had in Alabama, in terms of making parents, students, counselors, educators aware of the job opportunities in the region, and then providing a pathway to those jobs. We didn't really have that back in 1993. I think we're well ahead of the game today. There's a greater interest in manufacturing than there was back then because of these great global companies."

— eric@decaturdaily.com or 256-340-2435. Twitter @DD\_Fleischauer.

## Key vehicle parts will be made in area

Production of vehi- cles for Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA will include a mixture of off- site and on- site fabrication.

"There will be many key parts produced at Mazda Toyota manufac- turing and by our onsite partners," said Toni Eberhart with Corporate Communications for Mazda Toyota.

"MTM will stamp many

of the body panels welded together to form the body structure. Our onsite partners will produce key components such as body structure subas- semblies, interior and exterior plastic compo- nents such as front and rear bumpers, and tire/ wheel subassemblies."

According to the Ala- bama Department of Commerce, as of Janu- ary 2018, Alabama is the

fifth- largest producer of cars and light trucks nationally and stands at the center of the growing Southeastern automo- tive region with a strong automotive presence including Toyota's engine plant in Huntsville. There are more than 150 Tier 1 and Tier 2 automotive suppliers in the state, as well as automakers.

— Ashley Graves

## Alabama port adding automotive terminal

MOBILE (AP) — A new project at Alabama's main seaport will open the facility to the shipment of finished automobiles.

The Alabama State Port Authority said last month it had signed a deal to build a \$60 mil- lion automotive terminal in Mobile. It's supposed to be ready early next year and will allow for vehicles to roll on and off of ships.

The 57- acre terminal will be able to handle 150,000 vehicles annu- ally with connections to rail service and high- ways, officials said.

Mercedes-Benz, Hyun- dai and Honda currently make cars in the state, and Mazda Toyota Manu- facturing USA is building a factory in Limestone County. A docks official said the new terminal will open a new business

stream for the docks.

The project is a joint venture between Termi- nal Zarate, S.A., a Grupo Murchison company based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Neltume Ports, based in Santiago, Chile.

Mobile is the nation's 11th- largest deepwater seaport handling more than 58 million tons of cargo annually, the port authority said.

## Local suppliers of goods, services will be considered

By Ashley Graves  
For the Decatur Daily

While production at the Mazda Toyota Manufac- turing USA facility is still more than a year away, the \$1.6 billion, 4,000- worker project has already had a big impact across north

Alabama. Business recruit- ers in the 13- county North Alabama region have been working for months to lure suppliers for the facility.

When asked about the opportunities for local suppliers, Toni Eberhart with Mazda Toyota Cor- porate Communications

said that would be left up to both Toyota Purchasing and Mazda Purchasing.

"Vehicle compo- nent part sourcing is the responsibility of Toyota and Mazda for their specific model to be manufactured at Mazda Toyota Manufacturing,"

Eberhart said. "While Mazda Toyota Manufac- turing will not be directly sourcing component parts, we will have oppor- tunities for local goods and service providers to be considered."

She encouraged those who are interested to

reach out both Mazda and Toyota.

"Local part suppliers are welcome to contact Toyota Purchasing and Mazda Purchasing to explore opportunities as a part supplier."

North Alabama is home to more than 100

automotive companies in nearly every county. Anchors of the industry are the Toyota and Navistar engine plants in Huntsville. There are also numerous top suppliers for Alabama's other automakers, which include Mercedes-Benz, Honda, and Hyundai.





**OPPORTUNITY 2020**



Theodore Bridgeforth has seen Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama go from producing just V8 engines to also producing the V6 and a 4-cylinder engine. [COURTESY PHOTO]

SEEING HISTORY MADE

# Athens' Bridgeforth watches engine plant expand product lines

By Marian Accardi  
Staff Writer

HUNTSVILLE — Production had just begun at the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama engine plant when Theodore Bridgeforth started a job there in receiving conveyance, supporting the original V8 engine line.

That was almost 17 years ago.

Bridgeforth, 54, is now a group leader in receiving conveyance, supporting the next generation V8 line, after moves to shipping, general stores and back to receiving conveyance, with promotions along the way.

During his career at the plant, the Athens resident has seen the addition of V6 and 4-cylinder engine lines and other milestones — from the 1 millionth

engine produced in 2008 to the 6 millionth engine about 10 years later. Another major development came with the production of the next-generation 4-cylinder engine using the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA), a change in the way Toyota designs, engineers and produces its vehicles.

“It’s ever changing, it’s continuously changing,” Bridgeforth said. “Year to year, I’m doing something different.”

Bridgeforth grew up in a farming family, working at Bridgeforth Farms in Tanner in southern Limestone County since he was a child.

“That’s where I learned my work ethic,” working with his father and grandfather, he said.

Bridgeforth eventually

moved into manufacturing, working at the Athens location of the office furniture manufacturer Steelcase.

“When Toyota started accepting applications, one of my friends put in an application so I put in one, too,” he said. About three weeks later, he got a call about a job there.

“I love to plan, and Toyota gives me an opportunity to nurture that planning aspect,” he said. “I get an opportunity to plan (a project) and see it grow. That’s one of the true benefits I love about Toyota.”

“It helps nurture my skills set,” Bridgeforth said.

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FROM FAME TO FULL-TIME JOB

## West Limestone grad earned degree at Calhoun, employment at engine plant

By Marian Accardi  
Staff Writer

HUNTSVILLE — At 18, Chase Craig wasn’t sure about his plans after graduating from West Limestone High. At his father’s urging, he checked out the opportunities with the Alabama FAME Advanced Manufacturing Technician program.

He was accepted into the program in May 2015, and attended classes at Calhoun Community College while getting paid work experience at the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama engine plant in Huntsville. In two years, he had earned an associate degree.

While not guaranteed, there are opportunities for the sponsor company to hire AMT program graduates as permanent full-time employees.

That’s what happened for Craig and another AMT student right after they finished the program. Craig, who’s 23 and lives in Minor Hill in Limestone County, is a maintenance team member, working on the plant’s automated equipment and machinery.

Craig had enjoyed his experience working in a machine shop during his high school years and wanted to further develop his skills.

“I knew I wanted to expand what I was doing,”

said Craig, whose father has worked at the engine plant since it opened.

Craig is “a great example of how we’re trying to fill our own workforce needs with that pipeline program,” said Kim Ogle, corporate communications analyst with Toyota Motor North America. While he was in the AMT program, Craig and other students traveled to area schools to share their experiences in the program.

“The satisfaction of fixing something is a big reward, but continually learning (skills), I also like that about it,” he said.

The job also gave Craig the opportunity to travel

to Japan — and take his first airplane flight — to help check out some equipment for the Huntsville plant.

— marian.accardi@decaturdaily.com or 256-340-2438. Twitter @DD\_MAccardi.



Chase Craig is a maintenance team member at Toyota’s engine plant, working on automated equipment and machinery. [COURTESY PHOTO]

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**OPPORTUNITY 2020**



Cranes were numerous at the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA construction site in May. The DNUS plant will be situated on the Mazda Toyota site for quick delivery. [JERONIMO NISA/DECATUR DAILY]

# Supplier '80 feet away'

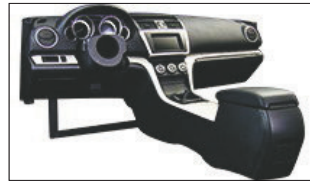
DNUS bumpers, instrument panels won't travel far

By Ashley Graves  
For the Decatur Daily

When DaikyoNishikawa's 400,000-square-foot plant that is under construction in Limestone County begins producing bumpers and eventually instrument panels for Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA, the parts won't have to travel far. "We're 80 feet away," said Jim Oakes, general manager administration with the new DaikyoNishikawa, or DNUS, plant that is on the 2,500-acre Mazda Toyota site in Limestone County. Either a motorized tugger or an automated guided vehicle will pull the parts through a breezeway spanning the approximately 960 inches between the DNUS and Mazda Toyota facilities.

## The suppliers

**DaikyoNishikawa (DNUS)**  
**Location:** on the 2,500-acre Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA property in the Greenbrier area of Limestone County  
**Investment:** \$110 million  
**Projected jobs:** 380  
**Plant size:** 400,000 square feet



DaikyoNishikawa will manufacture instrument panels in Limestone County for Mazda. [COURTESY ILLUSTRATION]



DaikyoNishikawa will make bumpers for both the Toyota and Mazda production lines.

**"We've got all the key (management) players in place, and now we're starting to hire our technical people."**

— Jim Oakes, general manager administration with the new DaikyoNishikawa, or DNUS, plant on the 2,500-acre Mazda Toyota site.

"So it's going to be just-in-time (delivery)," Oakes said.

The Mazda Toyota plant is scheduled to begin production in 2021 and will manufacture a new model sport utility vehicle for Toyota and a new Mazda SUV. The automakers have said the facility will employ 4,000 workers.

Japan-based DNUS announced in May its plans to invest \$110 million on its plant and equipment to manufacture large resin parts, becoming the first on-site partner with Mazda Toyota. Construction on the DNUS plant is ongoing, and Oakes said

the company hopes it'll be finished in mid to late summer.

This will be DNUS's first manufacturing plant in the United States. By establishing this facility, the company said it hopes to maximize its business opportunities by further strengthening relationships with major customers.

"Hiring for the eventual 300-plus jobs has already begun," Todd Blass, human resources manager for DaikyoNishikawa USA Inc., said. "DNUS is excited to reach out to the communities and bring in associates from the surrounding areas such

as Madison, Morgan, Limestone, Jackson and Marshall counties."

Oakes said the company had 13 employees for the Limestone plant in late January.

"We're right on schedule," he said. "We've got all the key (management) players in place, and now we're starting to hire our technical people."

DNUS plans to use Alabama Industrial Development and Training (AIDT) for help with hiring and training.

"Currently, all of our positions are found on the AIDT jobs website," Oakes said.

Hiring will ramp up this summer, and DNUS could have 150 to 200 employees by the end of 2021. By

December 2022, the plant may have reached its projected 380-employee level.

"That's all subject to change," Oakes said.

DNUS will supply bumpers to Toyota and both bumpers and instrument panels to Mazda. Because the Toyota production line will start up ahead of the Mazda line, DNUS will initially only deliver bumpers. Once Mazda begins production with one shift, DNUS will make both bumpers and instrument panels. As first Toyota and then Mazda add a second production shift, DNUS will continue to add workers, according to Oakes.

"Once Mazda adds the second shift, we'll be at

full capacity," he said.

Based in Hiroshima, DNUS operates about a dozen research and development centers and manufacturing plants in Japan and production sites in Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia and China. It has more than 5,000 employees across these sites.

The company supplies plastic parts to many of the major automakers based in Japan, including Mazda and Toyota.

"We're pleased that this world-class automotive supplier has selected our state for the site of its first U.S. manufacturing facility," Gov. Kay Ivey said in a release last year after the company announced plans for the Limestone plant.

## AMANDA G. SCOTT, CPA Revenue Commissioner - Morgan County, Alabama



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*Amanda G. Scott*

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**OPPORTUNITY 2020**



Construction of the Toyota Boshoku plant in Athens continues in late January. [JERONIMO NISA/DECATUR DAILY]

# Toyota Boshoku plant changes Athens landscape

By Ashley Graves  
For the Decatur Daily

It wasn't long ago that the future site of a global automotive supplier's plant at Breeding North Industrial Park in Athens still resembled bright green farmland.

But in the blink of an eye late last summer, red clay dirt and gravel dominated the landscape on West Sanderfer Road — a sign of new development. By early this year, the exterior of Toyota Boshoku America's plant that will supply Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA had taken shape.

"Plant construction is on schedule," Naomi Diedrichs, assistant manager of corporate strategy for Toyota Boshoku America, wrote in statement from the company. "We do not anticipate any delays at this time."

Erlanger, Kentucky-based Toyota Boshoku America is investing \$55.9 million in the 385,000-square-foot facility to make seat systems for Mazda Toyota. Toyota Boshoku expects to hire 414 full-time employees at the Athens plant.

"Hiring for management and salaried positions has begun as scheduled," Diedrichs's statement said.

Jim Morgan, general manager of manufacturing with Toyota Boshoku, said hiring for production positions would begin this spring.

Those interested in applying should visit the company's website at [toyota-boshoku.com/us/recruit](http://toyota-boshoku.com/us/recruit). Company officials recommended keeping a check on the site regularly for any announcements.

Operations are expected to begin in conjunction with Mazda Toyota, which plans to start production in spring 2021.

"We will be providing seats to MTMUS," the Toyota-Boshoku statement said. "This would include front and rear seats. Frame manufacturing and seat assembly will be completed at the Athens facility."

While Toyota Boshoku has extensive manufacturing operations in Japan, Toyota Boshoku America has quite a few manufacturing operations itself, employing more than 11,000 people in 20 locations throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. In addition to the Alabama location, the other U.S. manufacturing sites include Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Kentucky.

Toyota Boshoku was one of the first suppliers to announce plans for an



Toyota Boshoku America is the first Mazda Toyota supplier to locate in Athens. [JERONIMO NISA/DECATUR DAILY]

## The suppliers

**Toyota Boshoku America**  
**Location:** Breeding North Industrial Park in Athens  
**Investment:** \$55.9 million  
**Projected jobs:** 414  
**Site size:** 42 acres  
**Plant size:** 385,000 square feet

Alabama facility to make parts for the joint-venture Mazda Toyota factory.

When the search began for a site for the production facility, "we looked at many locations," said Shuhei Toyoda, chairman of Toyota Boshoku. "After an extensive search, we determined that Athens, Alabama, is the perfect fit."

The company will be the first automotive parts manufacturer to locate in Athens, said Toyoda, who was previously the company's president and also was CEO of Toyota Europe.

The \$1.6 billion Mazda Toyota plant in the Greenbrier area of Huntsville-annexed Limestone County is expected to have about 4,000 employees and will produce a new model of SUV for Toyota and a new-to-market Mazda SUV.

Toyota Boshoku America is a Tier 1 supplier, meaning that products will be shipped directly to the assembly plant.

Toyota Boshoku America, which is based in Erlanger, Kentucky, has more than 11,000 employees in 20 locations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. It has eight production facilities in the U.S., according to its



In April, the future site of Toyota Boshoku America's Athens plant was still a field at Breeding North Industrial Park on West Sanderfer Road. [MARIAN ACCARDI/DECATUR DAILY]

website, including one in Vance that supplies the Mercedes-Benz assembly plant. It also has plants in Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Illinois and Indiana.

Greg Canfield, secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce, said Toyota Boshoku has a "very rich heritage" and "deep roots" in the automotive sector.

The Athens industrial site had included the location of Jimmy Gill Park on Sanderfer Road, but the company and city are working to relocate the park.

Steelcase and Shape Corp. are among the companies with plants in the Breeding Industrial Park.



Workers make progress in June at the new Toyota Boshoku America plant's construction site in Athens. [JERONIMO NISA/DECATUR DAILY]

# OPPORTUNITY 2020



Construction continues on the Vuteq USA plant on Greenbrier Parkway in Limestone County. The plant eventually will have 200 workers. [JERONIMO NISA/DECATUR DAILY]

# Vuteq expects to receive equipment for new building in May

By Ashley Graves  
For the Decatur Daily

While several suppliers to the new Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant are building on its 2,500-acre site in Limestone County, Vuteq USA has acquired a 60-acre site nearby to build a manufacturing facility.

Japan-based Vuteq is using approximately 40 acres of its property on 7306 Greenbrier Parkway N.W. for a 200,000-square-foot plant and parking, according to Jennifer Walter, human resource manager of Vuteq USA Inc.

“Construction of the Vuteq facility is on schedule,” Walter said. “The ground sitework is ongoing, and the plan is to have the building partially completed around May of 2020, at which time equipment should start arriving.”

The company is investing \$60 million for the plant and equipment. It eventually will have about 200 employees at the Limestone County plant to produce interior and exterior plastic-injected parts



Vuteq USA Inc. is investing \$60 million for its Greenbrier Parkway plant and equipment to supply nearby Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA. [JERONIMO NISA/DECATUR DAILY]

and various sub-assemblies for the Mazda Toyota joint venture.

“All managerial level positions and the Pilot team members have been filled,” she said recently. “Everyone on board is diligently working to meet deadlines and ensure a smooth operation going forward. Vuteq has developed plans to recruit

additional office staff and hourly team members as we move into the upcoming months.”

According to the Alabama Department of Commerce’s website, once construction is complete, there will be initial production trials of equipment, molds, and secondary systems. A production launch is targeted for 2021.

“Vuteq will be producing various interior and exterior plastic resin parts,” Walter said. “Our facility will hold 13-14 injection mold machines that will perform a resin injection process.”

The Mazda Toyota plant also is scheduled to begin production in 2021 and will manufacture a new, unspecified sport utility



An artist's rendition of the planned Vuteq USA plant under construction off Greenbrier Parkway in Huntsville-annexed Limestone County. The 200-employee plant will produce interior and exterior plastic-injected parts and sub-assemblies for Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA. [COURTESY ILLUSTRATION]

### The suppliers

**Vuteq USA**  
**Location:** 7306 Greenbrier Parkway N.W., near the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant  
**Investment:** \$60 million  
**Projected jobs:** 200  
**Site size:** 60 acres; the plant and parking will use 40 acres of the site  
**Plant size:** 200,000 square feet

including Diversity Vuteq LLC, a minority joint venture.

Vuteq has more than 13,000 employees worldwide. It began North American operations in 1987 at Georgetown, Kentucky, where Toyota operates an assembly plant. Vuteq also has manufacturing plants in Mississippi, Indiana and Texas, and a location in Ontario, Canada.

“Vuteq USA Inc. is very pleased and excited to be opening our next plant in Alabama,” Vuteq USA’s president, Kazumasa Watanabe, said last year when announcing plans for the Limestone plant.

# Sanoh sees advantages to bending fuel and brake pipes on-site

By Bruce McLellan  
Executive Editor

Sanoh America Inc. will finish its manufacturing process inside the cavernous Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant in Limestone County for a simple reason.

Shipping efficiency. Sanoh will provide what is called the fuel-brake cluster, an assembly that includes two fuel pipes and two brake pipes that stretch from one end of a vehicle to the other, for both the Toyota and Mazda new model SUVs. Sanoh uses CNC (computer numerically controlled) bending to configure the pipes so they can be routed around various vehicle parts to the proper spots.

“The customer will send us X, Y and Z coordinates, and we’ll bend the contour to those coordinates,”

### The suppliers

**Sanoh America**  
**Location:** Inside the 3.7-million-square-foot Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant in Limestone County.  
**Investment:** \$2.9 million for equipment  
**Projected jobs:** 37

said David Holder, general manager of Southern operations for Sanoh.

If the pipes are still straight when they’re shipped from Sanoh’s Scottsboro plant, an 18-wheeler can haul about 1,000 sets at a time, Holder said. If the pipes are bent to the necessary configuration for a vehicle before leaving Scottsboro, a tractor-trailer has room for only about 120 sets at a time because they’re bulkier. So Sanoh will ship

straight sets of pipe to the Mazda Toyota plant and have an on-site operation that will bend the pipes. Sanoh will have one operation for the Mazda assembly line and another one for Toyota.

“They want it to come to their line sequenced to how they’re running their vehicles,” Holder said.

Sanoh, which has had operations in Scottsboro since 2000, will invest \$2.9 million for equipment it’ll use inside the 3.7-million-square-foot Mazda Toyota plant, according to Courtney Nelson, a human resource manager with Sanoh.

The company said it plans to hire 37 new employees for the on-site operation. Sanoh was the first on-site supplier announced publicly for Mazda Toyota. It will begin its first phase of hiring in

August, Nelson said. Not all 37 positions will be filled initially because they won’t be needed until later, Holder said.

Toyota will begin production first and Mazda will start later as they gradually build toward full production. Some of Sanoh’s positions in Limestone County likely will be filled by existing employees, and then new workers will be hired for the Scottsboro plant.

“I’ve got a few people who are interested who live in Huntsville, and they drive here now,” Holder said.

He said having workers for the new operation experienced with the company will be good because its process is unique. “You just don’t see this type of manufacturing anywhere,” he said.

The company allows only a 3-millimeter tolerance with any bend in any direction. Since Sanoh’s fuel-brake clusters extend through most of a vehicle, they can cause major complications if not correct.

“Let’s say the fitting was missing,” Holder said. “They’d have to stop the (production) line, take it off the vehicle and go to the rack and get another (fuel-brake cluster).”

Sanoh America has headquarters in Findlay, Ohio, and is owned by Sanoh Industrial based in Tokyo, Japan. Scottsboro is a hub for southern U.S. operations, which also include line-side production sites with Toyota in Blue Springs, Mississippi, and with Nissan in Canton, Mississippi and Smyrna, Tennessee.

Holder said the Limestone County operation

will be the 92nd facility that Sanoh has in 23 countries.

In the U.S. operation, the raw pipe, which can be metal or nylon, is made in Archibald, Ohio, before it’s shipped to Findlay for cutting and coating. All pipe gets a zinc coating, and some pipe also gets coatings of polypropylene and extruded nylon.

Once coated, the pipe is shipped to Scottsboro where fittings and end-forms are added. Some pipes also are bent in Scottsboro. The Scottsboro plant supplies pipe for the four existing on-site operations in the South as well as for the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga and the Honda plant in Lincoln.

—bruce@decaturdaily.com or 256-340-2431. Twitter @BruceMcLellan

**OPPORTUNITY 2020**

**FINAL WORDS**

# State leaders and business officials comment on Alabama's auto industry and Mazda Toyota

Following are comments from Alabama leaders and business officials who have made in the past 25 months about the auto industry in the state and Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA.

- "Alabama won a first-place trophy today in being selected for that plant." — Dave Sullivan, product analysis manager at AutoPacific Inc., on Jan. 10, 2018, when the Alabama location for Mazda Toyota was announced.

- "Thank you for choosing Alabama. Thank you for believing in the potential of our people in the great state of Alabama. Welcome to sweet home Alabama." — Gov. Kay Ivey in January 2018 after plant location announcement.

- "We're going to push that site and make sure all the suppliers know we have land available. This is going to be such a huge project and there are going to be so many suppliers, so we're going after them." — Morgan County Commission Chairman Ray Long in January 2018.

- "Volkswagen started in 2009. In the 2010 Census, we'd already grown by 22,000 people."

— Hamilton County Mayor Jim Coppinger in January 2018.

- "If ever there was a slam-dunk deal, this is a great one." — Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle in January 2018 on incentives offered for plant.

- "Every time someone (from industry) asks me about the Toyota-Mazda plant, their safe reaction is they're worried they're going to lose people. But don't panic. They are going to hire 4,000 people, but not in the first days." — Ed Castile, Alabama Industrial Development and Training executive director, in early 2018.

- "Today is a momentous day in Mazda's history." Kiyotaka Shobuda, the senior managing executive officer with Mazda Motor Corp., on Nov. 16, 2018, during a groundbreaking ceremony for the plant.

- "Together we've helped Alabama become one of America's Top 5 auto-producing states and an industry leader in producing the next generation of cars that will power our nation into the future." Jim Lentz, CEO of Toyota Motor North America, at Nov. 16, 2018, plant groundbreaking.

- "It is an honor for me to lead this project. Our vision is to be the supplier

of choice and a model corporate citizen in the community." — Ryuji Fujimoto, president of joint venture, Y-tec Keylex Toyotetsu Alabama, or YKTA, which is an onsite supplier of Mazda Toyota that will create 650 jobs producing structural parts such as body stampings and assemblies, along with functional parts like brake pedals.

- "People were glad to see the opportunity for job creation. Right off the bat folks were glad to see the economic opportunities, going to work here close to home." — Mayor Carroll "Lew" Watson, of Lincoln, in January 2020 on the reception of the Honda plant in that town.

- "I must tell you, if Mazda Toyota comes in there and conducts itself like Honda, you're going to be extremely pleased." — Lincoln's Watson in January 2020.

- "We continue to see interest and activity and growth in the supplier base all these years later. They (Mercedes-Benz) announced in 1993 and rolled the first car off the lot in 1997. Twenty-three years later and there's still a growing supplier base." — Jim Page, chairman of the Tuscaloosa-based Chamber of Commerce of



Page

West Alabama, in January 2020.

- "It's almost impossible to quantify the total impact that Mercedes has had on this community economically. The number of great careers and great jobs that have been produced as a result of Mercedes, that's been great for countless people and families in this community. That will continue to happen." — Page in January 2020.

- "Mercedes has evolved and expanded since they got here, and they're still doing it today." — Bryan Chandler, interim director of the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority, in January 2020.

- "The one thing I encourage the leaders of Decatur: You want positive growth. You want good communication between your elected leaders and the plant that is coming in." — Mayor Brenda Morrison, town of Vance, in January 2020.

- "I have never been in a facility, I don't think, that is that big, and every time I go out there and look at it, I still can't quite grasp what it's going to look like. I do know I will probably get some good steps in once we're actually on site. Part of our wellness initiative, walking around a good bit." — Lyndsay Ferguson,



Ferguson

assistant manager for HR Staffing and Development at Mazda Toyota, comments

in January 2020 on the 3.7-million-square-foot plant under construction in Limestone County and jokes about the fitness byproduct of the plant size.

- "We are truly a new company. We are literally building our systems from the ground up. So even though we have these two historic, long-standing parent companies, we're a startup just like any other startup that you could think of and we experience the same challenges as many of the startup environments would. New company. Two new production lines. Two new models. Neither of these vehicles has been manufactured in the U.S. before." — Ferguson in January 2020.

- "Right now we obviously don't have a plant, but we have 300 people on staff. ... What are they doing? They're literally all over the world. We have people in Mississippi. We have people in Texas. We have people in Kentucky. We have folks that are training in a lot of different places. People who are out at Robotics Technology Park doing training at AIDT. And that training is

so important to us so that we can make sure we give every team member the tools for them to be successful. ... We are sending team members for global skills training in Japan at Hiroshima and in Toyota City at both Mazda and Toyota headquarters so that they have an opportunity to work on the line side by side with their leaders and counterparts in Japan. And to learn from them, to learn the care and concern for their team members. ... Every person who is going to Japan, they go for three months of training over there before they come back here. They are going so that they can come back here and have the ability to train and develop others." — Ferguson in January 2020.

- "The one thing that we must do is remember who we are and who we want to be as a community. We can build on our strengths and market them aggressively while we work on our weaker points by recruiting people new to our community to assist in the challenges we will face. ... I know that together we can grow this community in a way not seen since the '60s while enhancing the quality of life most of us enjoy as citizens." — Wally Terry, Decatur Director of Development

— Compiled by Eric Fleischauer and Bruce McLellan

## Auto industry facts and figures

Following are facts and figures from the Alabama Department of Commerce about the state's auto industry.

### Top 5 auto producing states

The Alabama assembly plants operated by Mercedes-Benz, Honda and Hyundai combine to produce around 1 million vehicles annually, earning the state a No. 5 ranking in the U.S. for the production of cars and light trucks.

The Mazda Toyota facility will add another 300,000 vehicles to that production annually.

As early as 2022, Alabama could become the No. 2 auto-producing state, based on industry projections.

Following are the top five states, based on 2019 estimated auto production.

1. Michigan
2. Kentucky
3. Indiana
4. Ohio
5. Alabama

Source: Estimates published by Bloomberg News, based on data from IHS Markit, the industry researcher.

### Other facts

- The economic impact of Honda and its key suppliers was estimated at \$12 billion a year in an analysis released in September 2019. Honda and its supply chain contribute more than 45,000 jobs to the state's economy.

- Honda Alabama's payroll tops \$590 million annually, an average of \$79,000 a year per employee, according to the study.

- Honda, Hyundai and Toyota typically combine to produce more than 1.5 million engines in Alabama each year, with capacity expansion set to boost that figure.

- Toyota, which broke



The Honda Manufacturing of Alabama plant in Lincoln recently produced its 5 millionth Alabama-made vehicle, according to the Alabama Department of Commerce.

ground on its engine plant in Huntsville in 2001, has launched a \$288 million expansion at that plant, which will push total investment there to \$1.2 billion. The investment will add two new engine lines and raise annual capacity to 900,000 engines from 670,000. The plant now has more than 1,400 employees, and the latest expansion will add another 450 workers. The facility is expected to produce its 7 millionth Alabama-made engine in April 2020.

- Currently, 11 different models are assembled in Alabama. Mercedes models are the GLE and GLS sport utilities, the GLE Coupé crossover, and the C-Class sedan. Honda models are the Odyssey minivan, the Pilot SUV, the Passport SUV and the Ridgeline pickup. Hyundai models are the Sonata and Elantra sedans and the Santa Fe SUV.

- In 2021, Alabama's auto plants will produce a mix of 14 different models. In addition to those listed above, Hyundai will assemble the new Santa Cruz compact utility vehicle, and Mazda and Toyota will each produce an SUV model.

- Hyundai has produced

over 6 million Alabama-built engines, along with 4.5 million vehicles.

- In January 2018, Mercedes marked the production of its 3 millionth Alabama-made vehicle.

- Honda recently produced its 5 millionth Alabama-made vehicle.

- Combined, automakers have assembled more than 12.5 million vehicles in Alabama since the first M-Class rolled down the line in 1997.

- Motor vehicles are Alabama's No. 1 export category.

- Exports of Alabama-made automobiles approached \$6.4 billion in 2018, while exports of Alabama-made auto parts and products totaled nearly \$1 billion.

- The top export market for Alabama-made vehicles in 2018 was Canada, with over \$1.8 billion in shipments. Rounding out the Top 5 export destinations for Alabama-made vehicles were China, Germany, Mexico and Belgium.

The state Department of Commerce said statistics related to production come directly from the companies and export data comes from the U.S. Department of Commerce.



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**\$4,495**



'06 Nissan Murano



**\$5,995**

'12 Ford Focus SE



**\$5,995**

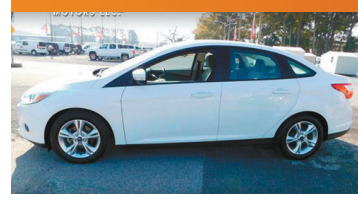


'14 Jeep Compass  
High Altitude Edition

1 owner

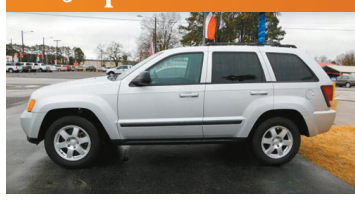
**\$10,495**

'14 Ford Focus SE



**\$6,995**

'09 Jeep Grand Cherokee



**\$6,995**

'06 Toyota 4Runner



V-6

**\$7,995**

'16 Buick Verano



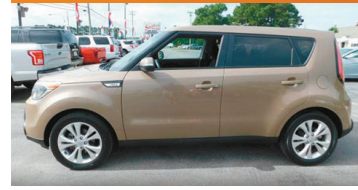
**\$8,995**



'12 Nissan  
Juke

**\$8,495**

'14 Kia Soul



**\$8,995**

'05 Chevy Silverado



Crew Cab

**\$8,995**

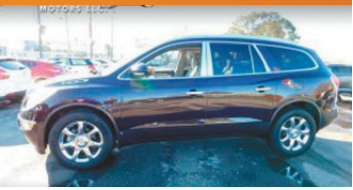
'15 Dodge Grand Caravan



1 Owner, #441

**\$8,995**

'09 Buick Enclave



**\$9,495**



'10 Toyota  
Venza

1 owner, AWD, V6

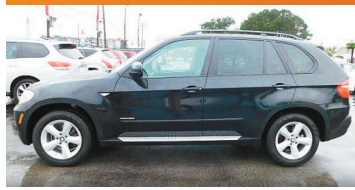
**\$11,995**

'14 Jeep Compass



**\$9,995**

'09 BMW X5



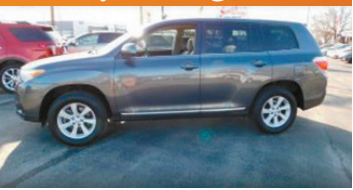
**\$10,995**

'12 Acura TSX



**\$10,995**

'12 Toyota Highlander



Leather, Nav, Sunroof

**\$11,995**

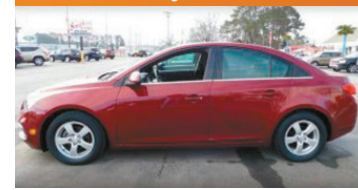


'07 Chevy  
Silverado LTZ

Crew Cab

**\$12,495**

'16 Chevy Cruze LT



**\$11,995**

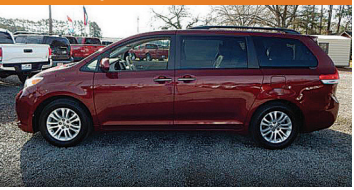
'10 Ford Mustang GT



Auto

**\$11,995**

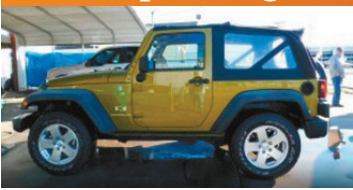
'11 Toyota Sienna XLE



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**\$11,995**

'07 Jeep Wrangler



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'07 Chevy  
Colorado

Crew Cab

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'14 Jeep Cherokee



Limited, Leather, Sharp

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'16 Dodge Grand Caravan



SXT

**\$12,995**

'07 Ford F-350



Dually, Diesel

**\$13,995**

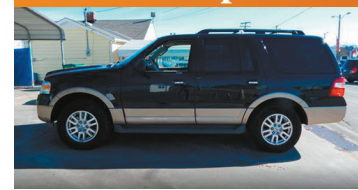
'12 GMC Yukon XL



**\$13,995**

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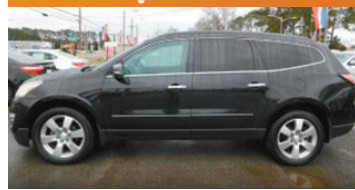
'14 Ford Expedition



XLT

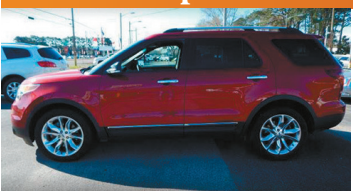
**\$14,995**

'14 Chevy Traverse LTZ



**\$14,995**

'14 Ford Explorer XLT



**\$16,995**

'14 Buick Enclave



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'18 Ford Transit



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