



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP OF ALABAMA

The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama is a totally private, non-profit organization supported by 70 of Alabama's leading companies and institutions that are committed to quality growth. EDPA's mission is to provide private sector leadership for economic development in Alabama.

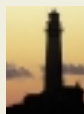
The Partnership was created in 1990 by a group of Alabama business leaders who shared a vision for a more dynamic economy in the state and a commitment to support the state's economic development efforts. Since its inception, EDPA has worked to accomplish several core objectives, which include: Raising Alabama's profile as an outstanding business location, attracting new industry, encouraging expansion of existing industry, growing jobs within the state and creating a better climate for growth.

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VantagePoint

Automotive & Alabama

Americans have a love affair with their cars, it's been said. In Alabama, you could say we're having a love affair with our car companies.

Seriously, when it comes to the automotive industry in Alabama, we consider ourselves extremely fortunate. At a time when an economic downturn is making life difficult for more than a few automakers, Alabama's top automotive companies continue to grow, expand and move forward with aggressive plans.

At the dedication of its gleaming new plant in December, Honda was already announcing plans to increase production capacity and hire an additional 800 workers (cover story, page 20). With the expansion, Honda will employ a total of 2,300 people at its \$580 million plant in Lincoln. By the end of the year, the company will have the capacity to produce 150,000 of the hot-selling Odyssey mini-vans and 150,000 engines annually.

Meanwhile, Toyota is moving rapidly toward completion of its \$220 million engine plant in Huntsville, where it will initially employ 350 workers to produce V-8 engines. Toyota has begun recruiting workers and, with assistance from the state, will begin training its work force in April. Its target to start making engines is the summer of next year.

Mercedes-Benz, which employs 2,000 workers Tuscaloosa, is in the midst of a \$600 million expansion project that will double production and work force at its facility.

Despite the slower economy, sales of the Alabama-built M-Class sport utility vehicle continued to be robust last year.

Clearly, the state's auto industry is hitting on all cylinders. Auto-related suppliers that have located in the last few years have also met with success. A manufacturer of seat frames and interior systems for auto manufacturers, CRH originally built a plant in Clanton employing 70

workers, but last year announced an expansion that will create an additional 275 additional jobs.

Before Fiat subsidiary Teksid had completed its aluminum engine castings plant in Sylacauga, the company was already announcing a second facility that will bring total employment to more than 500.

The enthusiasm level for the auto industry is running high these days, and rightly so. Alabamians, who have seen the state suffer job losses in apparel other industry sectors, appreciate the impact these companies are having on our economy and the well-paying jobs they provide. In return, the automotive companies seem to appreciate doing business in a state that values and works to support business and industry.

Automotive and Alabama: It's been a match made in heaven. May it last for many, many years to come. ■

Jacquie Shalia is president and CEO of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama.

