

The Corvette Stingray starts here

I recently had the privilege of attending the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Mich. The Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership extended the invitation to Mayor Fetters and me to participate in a conference of the Automotive Communities Partnership, hosted by the Center for Automotive Research.

The Herald-Press recently featured the story, especially as related to the excitement and community pride associated with Continental Structural Plastics (CSP) and their workforce in Huntington, which manufactures most of the exterior body panels for the new Chevy Corvette Stingray. I really don't know how to appropriately describe the excitement of listening to economists and industry leaders discuss the quality and future potential of lightweight structural plastics, as showcased on the Corvette Stingray.

Almost every speaker



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mentioned it. Basically, they were talking about the people who work in Huntington at CSP. It was awesome.

The mayor and I also had the pleasure of going to Cobo Hall, the Detroit Convention Center, to see the Corvette Stingray and personally watch as hundreds of people were drawn to the Corvette exhibit and felt the excitement. I really wish every employee at CSP in Huntington could have been there. The international automotive community is thrilled by your work.

The events also reminded me of the overall impact the automotive industry makes on the economy of not only Huntington County but on all of Northeast Indiana.

The new Chevy Silverado, assembled in Fort Wayne with the contributions of hundreds of people who live in Huntington County, was equally exciting.

The economist's presentations to the Automotive Communities Partnership sounded encouraging for the general automotive economy for 2013.

Our local unemployment situation was at its worst when the automotive industry nationally was struggling. The industry apparently produced slightly more than ten million passenger vehicles in 2009 when our unemployment rate locally spiked at 14.3 percent. Last year, the industry produced between fourteen and sixteen million vehicles and our unemployment rate averaged around 8 percent. Analysts at the conference reported that if the industry could produce more than twelve million vehicles each year, then the automotive manufacturing supply chain

would likely be "healthy." The same analysts predict that the 2013 market will be for at least fifteen million vehicles, thus my optimism about the automotive industry.

I add a word of caution though, because the industry is vulnerable to so many macroeconomic dynamics and governmental decisions, which can accidentally create problems. Regardless, the automotive workforce in our county is doing fantastic work and their products are being noticed internationally. It isn't just the Corvette Stingray parts, it's braking systems for commercial vehicles, carburetor parts for Ford, recreational vehicle conversions and others.

The automotive industry is critical to our county and our county is critical to the consumer in that process. Congratulations on a job well done.

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