Chrysler To Invest $72M In OH Plant

PERRYSBURG, Ohio (AP) — Chrysler Group LLC plans to invest $72 million in a northwest Ohio plant, and the state's governor said Tuesday there might be bigger things to come from the automaker.

Chrysler wants to install new equipment and modernize its Toledo Machining Plant near Perrysburg, which will allow it to retain 640 hourly and salaried jobs, the company said.

The plant will produce new-generation torque converters and steering columns. It said the converters would be paired with new transmissions being made at Chrysler plants in Kokomo, Ind., as part of the automaker's strategy to meet fuel economy requirements.

The announcement came as Ohio Gov. John Kasich met Tuesday with General Motors, Ford and Chrysler in Detroit to talk about their investments in the state and their continued presence in Ohio.

Kasich wouldn't offer many details about what was talked about but hinted that there are negotiations in the works with Chrysler.

The Blade newspaper of Toledo reported two weeks ago that the automaker might expand its Toledo assembly complex and add more than 1,100 workers at the plant that makes the Jeep Wrangler and Liberty and the Dodge Nitro.

"I'm positive about it moving forward," Kasich said.

Talks with the automakers included discussions about workforce training and retaining jobs, he said. Kasich said he is hopeful that the success of the new Chevrolet Cruze, the best-selling car in the U.S. in June, could lead to more work at General Motors Co.'s plant in Lordstown where the car is made.

Chrysler said it would install new equipment to modernize the Toledo Machining facility and boost its capabilities. Work on the plant would begin this year and end by early 2013.

"We're very pleased that Chrysler is making the decision to invest in the Toledo Machining Plant and the skilled workforce there," United Auto Workers vice president General Holiefield said in a statement. "This will help preserve and enhance jobs in the area and give a greater measure of security to our members and their families well into the future."

The facility employed about 840 people as of last month, most of them hourly employees, according its website. It currently makes steering columns for eight

assembly plants, including one in nearby Toledo, and produces torque converters, which allow the gears to be shifted in automatic transmissions.

Perrysburg Township administrator John Hrosko told The Blade that the Chrysler investment is "great news."

"We knew (Chrysler officials) were working very hard to get some money into this plant. The governor and his people also were working very hard and we knew they were going to try to get some funding," he said. "We sent a lot of letters in support of those efforts. Obviously some of those letters helped and they're going to go ahead and invest in the plant."

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