Honda's New Accord Brings Investment, Jobs To OH

Lisa Cornwell, Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — Honda's new Accord sedan to be unveiled Monday at a central Ohio plant has led to more than $220 million in investments and more jobs in two of its other Ohio plants, with companies that supply Honda with products and services also getting a boost.

Economic development officials in central Ohio are hopeful the new Accord to be produced at Honda's Marysville plant in Union County will lead to even more Honda investment in Ohio and bring more economic benefits to their areas.

"Every time Honda has invested in Ohio over its 30 years here, it's meant more jobs," said Eric Phillips, executive director for the Union County Economic Development Partnership. "If the Accord continues to be as successful as it has been, we're hoping that it might lead to additional investments and even more jobs here."

Phillips said area officials are hoping that Honda will choose the county as the site for production of its new version of the Acura NSX sports car. Honda has not yet announced the exact location, but says it will be near one of its Ohio plants.

The Accord competes in the biggest segment of the U.S. auto market and is often No. 2 on the list of best-selling cars behind the Toyota Camry. The 2013 Accord will begin production at the Marysville plant on Monday with Gov. John Kasich and Honda of America President and CEO Hide Iwata attending.

Production of new engines and transmissions for the new Accord began this week at west-central Ohio plants in Russells Point and Anna, where the manufacturer has added about 150 jobs between the two facilities. The Russells Point plant is providing the Accord's transmissions, with the Anna plant producing its engines and eventually the high-tech pulley components for Honda's new continuously variable transmission technology. That technology, to be deployed for the first time in the United States in the 2013 Accord, will improve fuel efficiency and driving performance, Honda spokesman Ron Lietzke said.

Paul Benedetti, president and chief executive of the Logan County Chamber of Commerce, said investment in the new model already has helped boost that county's economy, combined with the increased flow of auto parts that had been interrupted when Japanese factories were damaged by an earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

Unemployment in the last year has dropped to 6.2 percent from the previous 8.3 percent in the county that is home to the Russells Point plant. Benedetti said

Honda's investment has meant improved business for many Honda suppliers there, resulting in an estimated 700 new jobs.

"It's not just that Honda has been hiring, but we have openings for other immediate positions to be filled," he said.

In Union County, a Honda supplier of tooling and automation products has already added 10 employees and expects to more than double its total of 40 employees as a result of the new model and increased production in Marysville.

"We're so confident that we are planning to build a new larger facility," said Bassam Homsi, president of Autotool Inc. in Plain City.

Kasich spokeswoman Connie Wehrkamp said the new model is "great news" for the 13,500 Ohioans employed by Honda and for the tens of thousands employed by its Ohio suppliers.

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