Chrysler to Expand Toledo Plant

By SHEENA HARRISON

The Blade has learned that the automaker will add a second shift at the plant that builds the Jeep Liberty and Dodge Nitro, and the Wrangler plant, which produces the Jeep Wrangler. The Wrangler plant has two shifts and a combined 1,100 employees worked by Chrysler and its parts suppliers.

Chrysler plans to add to Toledo's employment to its highest levels since 2008. The automaker did not officially confirm details of its tax abatement application, pointing approval of a state income tax credit for the expansion.

Chrysler has sought other help with the planned Toledo plant expansion. The automaker requested 62,000 permits and $171 million in incentives from the Ohio Tax Credit Authority to help with the Toledo plant expansion. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency last month issued new air-quality permits to the Toledo plant expansion. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency last month issued new air-quality permits to the Toledo plant expansion.

The Blade did not have details on the potential project. Details of that potential project are unclear.

March 7, 1943. A jeep vehicle is unloaded from a World War II cargo ship. Published in The Toledo Times. Acme Photo from Acme Newspictures Inc. NY.

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New jobs will be added at the plant over the next 10 months, according to a tax abatement application Chrysler has filed with the city of Toledo. The project is expected to be completed by 2013, according to the application, and add 1,600 jobs.

In 1940, the U.S. government ordered the first MB vehicles, which were delivered to Camp Holabird in Maryland. The Army approved the design, and 70 additional prototypes were ordered for testing. Willys-Overland obtained the first major production contract in 1941 for the military vehicle.

The origin of the Jeep name remains unclear. Some say it came from a zephyr-like version of the “jeep,” others attribute it to the small, nifty design of the vehicle. For many women, it was the first time they wore slacks in public. It was the first vehicle to have a “three-point” interior on the front line, and a belt on the back seat. It was also the first vehicle to have a “steering wheel” on the back seat.

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1910: John North Willys starts constructing what will become the Jeep Parkway plant in Toledo.

1912: Willys-Overland Motor Co. ranks as the second-largest automaker behind Ford Motor Co. and has 15,000 employees by 1915, making it Toledo’s largest employer.

1928: Jeep Parkway plant reaches an employment peak of 23,000 people, who work in a 7-million-square-foot facility that includes more than 90 buildings and covers 119 acres.

1941: Production of military Jeeps begins, and about 363,000 are assembled at Jeep Parkway during World War II. Trailers, 155mm shells, aircraft parts, rockets, and other military equipment also are made at the factory during the war.

1945: First civilian Jeep, the CJ-2A and a predecessor of the Jeep Wrangler, is produced at the Jeep Parkway plant. Station wagons, pickups, the sporty Jeepster car, and sport utility vehicles eventually follow.

1953: A Kaiser-Frazer Corp. subsidiary buys Willys-Overland Motors Inc. and changes its name to Willys Motors Inc.

1954: Jeep Parkway plant builds its 5 millionth vehicle.

1964: The Stickney Avenue factory, which would later become part of today’s Chrysler Toledo Assembly complex where Wranglers are made, is purchased from The Electric Auto-Lite Co.

1969: Kaiser Jeep is sold to American Motors Corp. for $70 million. The plant is renamed Jeep Corp.


1985: The CJ-7 is moved to Brampton, Ont., and redesigned as the Wrangler the next year, marking the first time none of a Jeep model’s production comes from the Jeep Parkway plant.

1991: Chrysler announces it will discontinue production of the Grand Wagoneer and close the Stickney Avenue plant, laying off nearly 1,000 workers. Later, reports say Chrysler will reopen the plant to build Wranglers when the vehicle resumes production in Toledo the next year.

1992: The first Wrangler is made at the Stickney Avenue plant.

1993-95: Chrysler Toledo Jeep plant made Dodge Dakota pickup trucks.

1997: Chrysler Corp. announces plans to invest $1.2 billion in Toledo to build a new Jeep factory, making a replacement for the Cherokee.

1998: Chrysler Corp. merges with Daimler-Benz to form DaimlerChrysler AG.

2001: Production of the Jeep Cherokee ends at the Jeep Parkway plant, and begins with the replacement Jeep Liberty at the new Toledo Assembly plant a few miles away on Chrysler Drive. Wrangler production continues at Jeep Parkway and Stckney Avenue.

2002: Demolition begins on parts of the former Jeep Parkway plant.

2003: DaimlerChrysler AG and United Auto Workers Local 12 negotiate an agreement unique to North America, under which, as part of the agreement...
For more than a century, automobiles have rolled off of assembly lines in Toledo, and whether they carried an Overland, Willys, Dodge, or Jeep name, the vehicles made in Toledo have come to hold a special place in automotive history, having made their way to far-flung corners of the world, both during peace time and in war.

Since purchasing the Jeep brand and its former factory in Toledo in 1987, Chrysler has invested $1.2 billion in Toledo to build new Jeep factories. Toledo could soon produce more than twice that many vehicles per year.
John North Willys, president of Willys-Overland Inc., is shown with the 100,000th Whippet — a Whippet Collegiate Roadster — off the Toledo assembly line in May, 1927, in front of the plant’s administration building.

John North Willys, president of Willys-Overland Inc., is shown with the 100,000th Whippet — a Whippet Collegiate Roadster — off the Toledo assembly line in May, 1927, in front of the plant’s administration building.

active could travel anywhere despite his size. There are accounts, Mr. Rosenbusch said, of soldiers using the term “Jeep” for any light and small test vehicle before the introduction of the MB.

After the war, Willys-Overland attempted to capitalize on the relationship its go-anywhere, do-anything vehicle had forged with the millions of soldiers, sailors, and Marines who had used the vehicle to accomplish their missions.

In 1946, Willys-Overland copyrighted the “Jeep” name and distributed the Jeep CJ-2A, a “civilian” version of the military Jeep that traded its gun mounts for more mundane tasks. It featured a power-takeoff, allowing engine power to be used for operating other equipment, that made it capable of serving as a small tractor. It could take four people to church on Sunday.

A year later, attempting to broaden the new brand’s appeal, the Toledo company expanded its product lineup to include two and four-wheel-drive trucks, and by 1948, had brought out a much-improved Jeep CJ-3A model. It featured a power takeoff, allowing engine power to be used for operating other equipment, that made it capable of serving as a small tractor, but it also could take four people to church on Sunday.

In 1947, Kaiser Manufacturing Corp. bought Willys-Overland Motors Inc. for $62.3 million, and a year later introduced the Jeep CJ-5, a rounded-over version of the civilian Jeep that would stay in production with some modifications for the next 29 years.

While Jeep’s corporate ownership changed a few times over the next several decades — Kaiser became American Motors Corp. in 1969, and French automaker Renault took a big stake in AMC in 1980 — Jeep’s vehicles continued to dominate the small off-road vehicle market. That changed in 1983, when the first versions of what would become one of the best-selling sport utility vehicles of all time, the Jeep Cherokee, or XJ, debuted.

A much smaller version of the full-sized SJ-model Jeep that had carried the Cherokee name since 1974, the new XJ was a lighter, boxier, unibody vehicle that found broad market acceptance and is credited with helping to ignite the SUV craze in the late 1980s and 1990s. More than 2 million XJs were built from the now-gone Jeep Parkway plant over the vehicle’s 17-year production run, overlapping Jeep’s replacement of its CJ models with a new version — now called Wrangler — in 1987, and introduction of the new Detroit-built Grand Cherokee in 1993.

Two of the Jeep brand’s most recent vehicles each had significant impacts on the brand’s hometown workforce in Toledo. In 2001, four years after Chrysler Corp. agreed to build a new state-of-the-art production facility in Toledo, the first Jeep Liberty, a new compact SUV intended to replace the aging Cherokee, rolled off its Toledo assembly line.

Six years later, the brand debuted its first four-door version of the Wrangler, called the Wrangler Unlimited, from a second new assembly plant in Toledo.