

Flying High In Detroit South

We first saw Alabama referred to as “Detroit South” in national news articles two years ago following the announcement that Hyundai would build a manufacturing facility in Montgomery. After attracting four of the world’s largest automakers in less than nine years, Alabama was suddenly being heralded as a new center for automotive production.

Today, Hyundai Motor Manufacturing of Alabama has nearly completed construction of its \$1 billion facility, which is the first U.S. assembly plant for the Korean automaker. We look at the positive impact Hyundai and its suppliers are having on central Alabama in the story that begins on page 9.

In addition, Honda Manufacturing of Alabama has started production at its new Line 2 facility (see *Advances*, page 6), Mercedes-Benz U.S. International will complete construction of its second plant later this year and Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama is already expanding its new engine plant in Huntsville. The work force at each company is growing.

Without question, automotive has been the big economic story in Alabama over the last decade, but it’s not the only industry driving growth in the state.

In this issue we take a close look at the aerospace industry, which has been a major contributor to Alabama’s economy for decades. Barbara Sloan’s story on page 28 reveals what a rich aerospace and aviation heritage the state has, and how far reaching its

impact has been.

The foundation for the U.S. space and rocket program was established in Huntsville, where Marshall Space Flight Center was responsible for developing the launch system for the U.S. space missions, including the Saturn V rocket that took us to the



moon. Marshall is still the site today of many of the country’s most important and challenging space and defense projects.

While the space and defense sector in Huntsville accounts for the majority of aerospace jobs, the industry in Alabama is diverse, both in the regions represented and the number of sectors in which companies are operating. There are five distinct aerospace/aviation clusters in Alabama, with companies involved in manufacturing components for aircraft, conducting maintenance, repair and overhaul on aircraft and engines, building aerospace vehicles and providing engineering services for the industry.

In the last decade, high-profile automotive projects have understandably commanded most of the attention the state has received. But, meanwhile, aerospace in Alabama has continued to soar to new heights. ■

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