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Autos & Mobility Industry Briefing -- 10th May to 16th May 2021

News is arranged by company and topic. Stories that apply to more than one company or topic are duplicated.

News about the major automakers

Daimler (history)

- CEO Källenius says that there needs to be an “honest conversation” about the impact of a shift to electric vehicles on jobs because electric powertrains require fewer labour hours than internal combustion engines. ([Reuters](#))
- Unveiled the Concept EQT van which previews the Citan’s replacement. ([Daimler](#))
- Daimler Trucks and Volvo believe they can reduce fuel cell costs by a factor of five or six by 2027. ([Reuters](#))

Ford (history)

- Mahindra reckons that when it was working on joint venture programs in India with Ford, the cost targets were 40% lower than Ford was achieving alone because Ford “simply cannot think or perform as frugally”. ([Autocar](#))
- Will brand over the air updates as “Ford Power-Up” and announced a deeper integration with Amazon’s Alexa personal assistant. Ford hopes to use the artificial intelligence behind Alexa to offer customised skills for its customers, although it isn’t clear how exclusivity will be preserved. ([Ford](#))
- The all-electric F-150 will be badged “Lightning”, last used for souped-up versions of the truck in the early 2000s. Following on from Mustang Mach E, the decision indicates Ford will be using sporty branding for all-electric models, even if the cars themselves are more towards the utilitarian end of bodystyle segmentation. ([Ford](#))
- Despite plans to reduce the UK dealer footprint and wider concerns about the growth of online sales, Ford’s wholly-owned dealer group is still acquiring sites. ([Motor Trader](#))

Geely (includes Volvo) (history)

- Volvo confirmed that it is exploring plans to list at the end of the year. ([Volvo](#))

General Motors (history)

- A union at the Silao, Mexico, plant was accused of tampering with ballot papers on changes to union rules. US trade representatives believe there may be a case to be answered under USMCA (NAFTA’s replacement). ([Detroit News](#))
- Says that “most” all-electric cars which have the battery pack replaced receive a refurbished unit, rather than all new parts. GM has will recycle in partnership with Li-Cycle from the end of 2021 onwards, using a process GM hopes will reduce greenhouse emissions by 30%. ([GM](#))
- The UAW union is spoiling for a fight over organising rights at the new battery factories GM is building in partnership with LG. ([Detroit Free Press](#))

Honda (history)

- Reported full year financial results for the year ended March 2021. Automotive revenue of 8.6 trillion JPY (about \$78 billion) fell (14)% versus prior year. Automotive operating profit of 90 billion JPY (about \$830 million) dropped (40)%. Honda hopes that unit sales will grow about 10% this year. ([Honda](#))

Hyundai / Kia (history)

- Intends to invest \$7.4 billion in the USA by 2025, a figure that appears to include the recent majority shareholding in robot firm Boston Dynamics. ([Hyundai](#))

Nissan and Mitsubishi (history)

- Reported full year financial results for the year ended March 2021. Revenue of 7.9 trillion JPY (about \$72 billion) fell (20)% whilst an operating loss of (151) billion JPY was almost three times higher than the prior year. Nissan said its turnaround plan was gaining traction and it will hopefully be around breakeven this year. ([Nissan](#))

Renault (history)

- Renault's CEO has asked engineers to re-investigate the potential for battery swapping. ([Autocar](#))

Stellantis (formed via the merger of PSA and FCA)

- CEO Tavares is giving each Stellantis brand 10 years to prove its worth. ([Detroit News](#))
 - Significance: Despite the tough talk, it appears unlikely that the Peugeot or Fiat brands would be retired, whatever their performance.
- Tavares worries that cars will only be for the rich if electric powertrain is forced upon customers whilst the technology is immature, driving prices up. ([Telegraph](#))
- Cutting a shift at the Bellevidere, USA, plant due to slow sales of the Jeep Cherokee. ([Detroit News](#))

Subaru

- Reported full year financial results for the year ended March 2021. Revenue of 2.8 trillion JPY (about \$26 billion) dropped (15)% whilst operating profit of 102 billion JPY (about \$940 million) was less than half the prior year level. Subaru expects to be back to pre-coronavirus levels this year. ([Subaru](#))
- Detailed the progress on its turnaround plan. Subaru says it will improve profits through better plan product architecture and growing US market share to 5%. ([Subaru](#))

Tesla (history)

- In an odd volte-face, Elon Musk said Tesla would no longer accept Bitcoin as payment for cars. Although it wasn't clear if anyone has been using the facility, it was seen as a lack of confidence in the cryptocurrency which dropped in value as a result. Musk attributed the move to concerns about the environmental impact of creating the currency and running the blockchain but since this is a longstanding issue it isn't clear why Tesla agreed in the first place. ([Autocar](#))

Toyota (history)

- Reported full year financial results for the year ended March 2021. Revenue of 27.2 trillion JPY (about \$250 billion) fell (9)% whilst operating income of 2.2 trillion JPY (about \$20 billion) fell (8)%. ([Toyota](#))
- Because the catalytic converter design in older Toyota models is particularly easy to steal, the company is paying for tens of thousands of UK cars to have their catalytic converters marked so that police will know if units found in suspicious circumstances have been nicked. The problem is so bad that Toyota had to restart production of obsolete parts to provide replacements. Whoever makes the second most easy to steal catalytic converters might need to step up their game. ([Toyota](#))
- Now expects to have sold 2 million BEV and fuel cell vehicles by 2030, although Toyota thinks that they will still be outsold 3:1 by PHEV and hybrid models. ([Toyota](#))

VW Group (history)

- Porsche plans to ramp up its bespoke workload by launching an extended range of options within the online configurator and resurrecting the "Sonderwunsch" program for one-off cars. ([Porsche](#)) There is also a plan to offer more extensive upgrade options for older cars. ([Porsche](#))
- Another week, another Hermès-clad bespoke car. After [Rolls-Royce](#), it was Bugatti's turn to unveil an interior laden with expensive French leather. Is the brand now too commonplace? ([Bugatti](#))

- Dissolving a legal entity structure where several German plants are separate from the rest of the company . Through the change (which will take until 2027), working agreements will be synchronised. ([VW](#))
- Reportedly plans a 20 GWh solid state battery plant in Salzgitter, Germany. ([QuantumScape](#))
- Porsche expects that most of its workforce will spend about half their time working remotely and plans to furnish them with large screens and other accessories to help them work comfortably from home. Accordingly, the company is planning to reduce office capacity. ([Handelsblatt](#))

Other

- **Gordon Murray** announced a plan to develop a flexible electric vehicle platform for B-sized (small) vehicles that will underpin a series of designs for established brands. After earlier plans for small vehicles showed promise but didn't reach production, the business model is being changed to reduce upfront fees. ([Autocar](#))
- **Fisker** and **Foxconn** said that the "Project PEAR" vehicle they are jointly developing will have a price tag under \$30,000. The launch date has dropped back to Q4 2023. ([Autocar](#))
- **BYD** is spinning off its chips business. ([Nikkei](#))
- **Human Horizons** says that its cars sits in a new category of vehicles called Techlux. The term might not catch on though, and Human Horizons have trademarked it. ([Human Horizons](#))

News about other companies and trends ...

Suppliers

- **Kongsberg** announced Q1 2021 revenue of €303 million and adjusted EBIT of €20 million. ([Kongsberg](#)) The firm held an investor day. ([Kongsberg](#))
- **Randon** reported Q1 2021 revenue of 2.8 billion BRL (about \$530 million) and net income of 134 million BRL (about \$25 million). ([Randon](#))

Dealers

- **Cazoo** celebrated the sale of its 25,000th car, 18 months after launching. Working from 17 sites, supported by 180 delivery vans, the current run rate appears higher than the number of locations would explain if operating under the conventional model. ([Motor Trader](#))
- Indian used car website **CarTrade** reportedly plans to raise \$272 million in an IPO. ([Tech In Asia](#))
- **China Automotive Systems** reported Q1 2021 revenues of \$130 million and net income of \$3 million. ([CAAS](#))

Driverless / Autonomy (history)

- **WeRide** said it has raised lots more money. ([Deal Street Asia](#))
- Lidar company **Innovusion** raised \$64 million. ([TechCrunch](#))
- Argo (owned by **VW** and **Ford**) says that its in-house lidar unit has a range of 400 metres. ([VW](#))
- A Waymo customer recorded a slapstick moment where a vehicle became stuck in the face of confusing traffic cones and then drove away as operators tried to restore service, before being stuck again. ([The Verge](#))

Connectivity

- **Italian** authorities fined **Google** €100 million for denying **Enel's** charging app access to the Android Auto app store. ([TechCrunch](#))

Other

- The former head of the **UAW** received 21 months of jail time for corruption. ([Detroit News](#))
- Scooter rental firm **Bird** is listing through a merger with a special purpose vehicle that values it at \$2.3 billion. ([Bird](#))