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***CAR Trade Mission to Italy Promotes
Business and Investment from Fiat and Italian Automotive Suppliers
Mission Participants include Diverse Group from the U.S. Midwest region and Ontario, Canada***

ANN ARBOR, Mich., January 25, 2010 – In December of 2009 the Center for Automotive Research (CAR), through its Automotive Communities Program (ACP), led a trade mission representing automotive communities and suppliers from the U.S. Midwest and Ontario, Canada to Turin, Italy to establish relationships designed to promote investment in the region by Italian companies. In addition to participation fees, the trade mission was made possible by funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor.

The trade mission was organized with the close assistance of the Milan office of the U.S. Department of Commerce Commercial Service. U.S. Ambassador to Italy David H. Thorne and U.S. Consul General to Italy Carol Z. Perez joined the group during portions of the trip.

During the trade mission, participants met with high-level executives from Fiat and several Italian automotive suppliers. Participating communities and economic development groups included Growth Dimensions for Belvidere and Boone County, Inc. from Illinois; Economic Development Corporation of Greensburg/Decatur County, Duke Energy, and Grant County Economic Growth Council, Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership from Indiana; Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce/Kentucky Transpark from Kentucky; Lucas County Improvement Corporation, Wood County Economic Development Commission from Ohio, and the Town of Tillsonburg, Ontario.

Participating automotive suppliers included Future Engineering, Inc. from Flushing, Michigan; Huizenga Group/Monroe LLC from Grand Rapids, Michigan; Machine Tool & Gear, Inc. from Corunna, Michigan; Precise Finishing Systems from Howell, Michigan; Saginaw Machine Systems from Saginaw, Michigan; Wineman Technology from Saginaw, Michigan and Walbridge from Detroit, Michigan.

At the invitation of Fiat, the group spent a full day at several Fiat facilities, including the Fiat Motor Village and Mirafiori assembly plant. Fiat made several high-level executives available for one-on-one meetings with participants, including Sergio Carpentieri, the chief executive in charge of integrating the Chrysler and Fiat supply chains, as well as the heads of purchasing for several key departments, including plastics, powertrain, and capital tooling. Participants from communities and economic development groups presented information on their communities to an audience of Italian automotive executives during a special half-day seminar attended by more than 30 Italian suppliers interested in possible investment in the ACP region.

Due to Fiat's ownership stake in Chrysler, communities and companies who create strong relationships with the Italian automotive industry stand to attract investment and business from Italian automotive firms who will play a role in the operations of the new Chrysler/Fiat. Likewise, retention of existing automotive investment is more likely for communities with strong ties to company leadership.

Mission participants report the contacts made during the trade mission promise to deliver the close relationships they hoped would be fostered by participating in the trade mission. Participants were overwhelmingly positive in their feedback, including comments from several representatives stating this was the best trade mission in which they had ever participated.

"We are having some excellent success from the meetings CAR was able to coordinate for us while there," said Tim Johnson, sales manager/marketing coordinator at Wineman Technology, Inc. Jim Smith, engineering manager at Machine Tool and Gear stated "I was able to meet some wonderful people while at the same time creating potential business relationships. It was a great experience. CAR did a great job facilitating the event."

The Automotive Communities Program (ACP) is a unique partnership that brings together community leaders, industry leaders, and other stakeholders with the goal of sustaining and growing the region's automotive endowment. With a guiding principle that automotive investment anywhere in the ACP region benefits communities throughout the region, the program's main goal is to link major centers of automotive activity to each other and to leading companies in the North American automotive industry to help create regional automotive renewal.

The Center for Automotive Research, a nonprofit organization, is focused on a wide variety of important trends and changes related to the automobile industry and society at the international, federal, state and local levels. CAR conducts industry research, develops new methodologies, forecasts industry trends, advises on public policy, and sponsors multi-stakeholder communication forums.

For more information about the trade mission, ACP, and CAR, or to request photos from the trade mission, please contact Bernard Swiecki at (734) 929-0484 or bswiecki@cargroup.org.