



A RELATIONSHIP THAT BEGAN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The southern U.S. states of Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida share historical and cultural ties with Japan that date back to the early 20th century. As the south’s economic strengths evolved through the decades, so have Japanese investments. The relationship started with Japan’s interest in the region’s agricultural exports, which later became fertile ground for Japanese manufacturers, carmakers and clean-technology companies.

“Each of those states has had a long, mutually beneficial partnership with Japan. While most people think first of huge economic benefits from positive Japan-U.S. relations, more importantly, this resulted in Japanese companies having greatly contributed to the expansion of the Southern Automotive Corridor,” **Consul General of Japan in Nashville Hiroyuki Kobayashi** said.

Competitive labor environments, leading workforce development programs, low utility costs and cooperative state governments are factors that have made this region an excellent business and investment destination.

“We will see more investment by Japanese companies in the automotive industry, which is exemplified by the future plant of Toyota-Mazda in Alabama. And I hope that more southern companies with innovative technologies will have interest in establishing a base in Japan, as two-way investments are keys to expand our business relationship,” **Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Atlanta Office Executive Director Takuya Takahashi** said.

Alabama: Strengthening mutual benefits

Since the early to mid

1990’s, Alabama has proven to be one of the south’s most important manufacturing clusters. The state’s manufacturing capability began with the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Alabama. The German carmaker’s confidence in finding success in the state opened opportunities to Japanese automakers such as Honda, Toyota and the new \$1.6 billion dollar Mazda-Toyota factory in northern Alabama’s Huntsville region.

“Japanese business investment has had a tremendously positive impact on Alabama over the years, and this footprint continues to grow today with new projects that are bringing thousands of good jobs to communities in our state. Alabama’s longstanding economic relationship with Japan is very important to us, and we’re committed to strengthening these mutually beneficial bonds in the coming years,” **Gov. Kay Ivey** said.

At present, 90 Japanese companies selected Alabama as a manufacturing base, the majority of which are major suppliers of parts not only to Japanese carmakers, but also to American and other Asian auto manufacturers along I-65.

“The key reason Japanese investors chose Alabama is that the economic

development community is prepared to receive Japan’s strict end-to-end requirements when it comes to ample land, infrastructure, workforce and community support” **Honorary Consul General of Japan in Birmingham Mark Jackson** said.

This economic development community expects that Japanese suppliers to the major automotive manufacturers in Alabama will follow and set up shop in the state in the short to medium term.

Tennessee: Enhancing rural communities

Like in other states in the south, Japan is the largest source of foreign direct investment in Tennessee, with about 200 Japanese companies operating in the state and employing around 50,000 Tennesseans in advanced manufacturing, automotive and chemicals. Memphis in the west, Nashville in the middle and Knoxville toward the mountainous east have become hubs of Japanese car manufacturing and chemical production.

“I have a particular interest in developing economic strength in rural Tennessee. Numerous Japanese companies have located their plants in these rural communities. Not only do they bring much-needed

high-paying jobs, but they also enhance the life and culture of these communities,” **Gov. Bill Lee** said.

“I’m excited to meet with business leaders in Japan. I’d like to express our gratitude because the economy of Tennessee has been profoundly impacted in a positive way through Japanese investments here,” added Lee, who is keen on attracting more Japanese investment.

The recently-elected governor’s priority in developing Tennessee’s rural economy complements the Japanese industry’s strategy of looking at rural areas to establish their manufacturing bases. Coupled with the Southerners’ strong work ethic and high skills, Japanese manufacturers and local Tennesseans are a perfect match.

Mississippi: Attracting more investors

Japan is the Magnolia State’s largest investor and one of the state’s largest foreign job creators. Centered on the Nissan plant in Canton and the Toyota plant in Tupelo in the northeast, Japanese manufacturers consider Mississippi as a crucial base in the North American market.

Similar to other states in the south, Mississippi is at a crossroads where manufacturers can take advantage of

its deep-water ports and its proximity to major domestic markets like Texas and the Midwest. But what sets Mississippi apart is its abundance in value-added land and availability of infrastructure.

“We are the only state that both has a Toyota and Nissan facility” said **Gov. Phil Bryant**, who went on an investment mission to Japan in 2018. Close to 50 Japanese companies employ more than 10,000 Mississippians, and the Magnolia State is excited to attract more investors especially as Japanese investments in neighboring states rise.

The automotive corridors within the Southern United States that run east to west and north to south means that Mississippi is conveniently integrated with the rest of America’s markets and manufacturing bases.

Florida: Business-friendly environment

With more than 200 Japanese companies accounting for nearly 26,000 jobs, Florida has become an optimal and strategic state for Japanese business, including manufacturing, life sciences, aerospace and defense. In fact, many Japanese companies have used Florida as their headquarters for Latin American operations.

As foreign investment from Japan has increased, recently appointed **Consul General of Japan in Miami Kenji Hirata** has stressed the importance of strengthening ties between Japan and the state.

“When it comes to economic relations, what I would like to do is to create a conducive environment for the support of free trade to strengthen Japanese investment and Japanese export,” said Hirata.

“There are a lot of opportunities for Florida-Japan cooperation in the areas of water management, hospitality, and aerospace,” he added.

With its business-friendly environment, low taxes, and multilingual labor force, many companies are attracted to Florida. This has been shown by individuals who are also starting to relocate to the state due to its quality of life and great climate.

“Florida is such a diverse state. It now has the third-highest population in the U.S. and has grown to become a trillion-dollar economy with some 126 million visitors last year. If Florida were taken independently, it would be the 18th-largest economy in the world,” said **David Woodward**, the executive director of the **Florida Delegation of the Southeast U.S./Japan Association**. ■

ALABAMA

BRINGING JAPANESE MANUFACTURING EXCELLENCE TO ALABAMA

Topre America Corp., a manufacturer of automotive metal press products, has undergone several expansions — its seventh in Alabama and its eighth in Tennessee — since it moved to the United States in 2004. The Japanese subsidiary attributes that success to how its looks after its employees, whose dedication results in top-notch, cutting-edge solutions.

The latest expansion last year, worth \$80 million, has generated nearly 100 jobs and produces stamped automotive parts for Toyota, Nissan and Honda.

“The state of Alabama and the town of Cullman have been very helpful, resourceful and have all been key participants in the successful launch of this plant. And programs such as AIDT (Alabama Industrial Development Training) have been a tremendous benefit for our plant,” **Topre America Corp. President Hideo Shimizu** said.

“We have a long-standing history with multiple customers, such as Nissan, Honda and Toyota. One of our priorities is to demonstrate our ability to exceed all our customers’ expectations regarding quality and delivery time. We must prove that our new plant is capable of meeting those expectations just like the rest of our facilities to gain the trust of our current and potential customers,” Shimizu added.

Topre has found success in the ultra-high strength steel (UHSS) market, providing all its customers with a competitive edge through safer and more fuel-efficient vehicles.

“We have worked closely with our customers in the development process to achieve their goals and become a strong competitor in this area. We are very thankful for the trust of our customers and the opportunity to supply UHSS products to the automotive market. We hope to continue growing the relationship with our customers, employees and the communities in which we operate,” Shimizu said.

By making high-quality, competitively priced parts that are delivered on time and by hiring highly skilled local workers, Topre America will secure the future of its business and provide stable employment to the local community. ■

→ www.topre.co.jp/en/



Topre America's headquarters in Cullman, Alabama employs 750 people.

UNA SEEKS PARTNERSHIPS WITH JAPANESE UNIVERSITIES

Founded in 1830 as a liberal arts institution, the **University of North Alabama (UNA)** has transitioned into a comprehensive university that plays a vital role in Alabama’s economy and manpower development that goes beyond U.S. borders.

“As a university that is strong on research, we listen to the needs of the region and think of how we can best serve them. We’ve just completed our new strategic plan and it sets out our goal to be a global institution with an internationalized curriculum,” **UNA President Kenneth Kitts** said.

“Employers in today’s market are seeking graduates with a hybrid skill set. Businesses need employees with ‘soft skills,’ while STEM fields look for people with the business acumen to sell new products and inventions. It is our mission to ensure the success of our students by maintaining the highest standards in academic achievement and relevancy in today’s job market,” Kitts added.

This new focus is echoed by **UNA provost Ross Alexander**: “UNA is a very progressive, entrepreneurial and innovative type of place that is developing an institutional identity locally, regionally and globally in providing career-ready education.”

UNA hosts more than 300 international students from more than 40 countries, including Japan.

Many of them, according to **Senior Vice Provost for**



UNA President Kenneth Kitts

International Affairs Chunsheng Zhang, study under partnership programs that allow them to earn double degrees in less time and for less money.

“We have eight partnerships in Japan and we want to increase that number as double degrees become more popular in Japan,” Zhang said. ■

→ www.una.edu



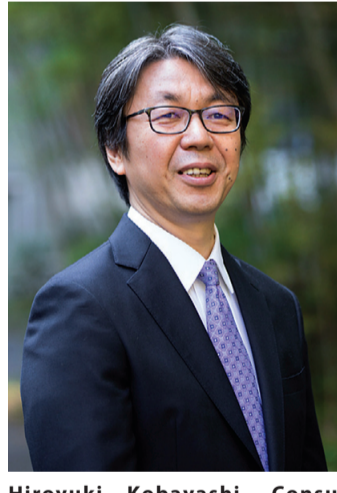
Alabama Governor Kay Ivey



Tennessee Governor Bill Lee



Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant



Hiroyuki Kobayashi, Consul General of Japan in Nashville



Kenji Hirata, Consul General of Japan in Miami



JETRO Atlanta Office Executive Director Takuya Takahashi

MISSISSIPPI

HOW MISSISSIPPI WORKS FOR BUSINESS

As states in the Deep South continue attracting more families and businesses because of the lower cost of living, higher quality of life and friendly population, the phrase “Southern hospitality” has ceased to become a hollow cliché. Evidence of this is the decision of Japanese auto giants Toyota and Nissan to build their assembly plants in Mississippi a few years ago.

“Since Gov. Phil Bryant came into office in 2012, Japanese companies have invested more than \$800 million in the state, resulting in the employment of more than 15,000 Mississippians. Japan is the state’s largest investor, while the country is among Mississippi’s top five trading partners,” **Mississippi Development Authority Executive Director Glenn McCullough, Jr.** said.

By being in the Deep South, Japanese companies in Mississippi are in a strategic lo-

cation to deliver their products and services across the entire United States in a cost-effective manner. The state has much build-ready land ideal for factories and distribution centers.

In 2018, Mississippi announced 14 sites across the state under its Site Development Grant Program, and a few years previously, unveiled two interstate highways, I-22 and I-269, which will serve as a crucial links between Canada and Mexico via the state.

The state also has a huge skilled workforce and business-friendly policies that ensure the long-term feasibility of any business. Bryant, who was reelected to a second term in 2016, made the lowering of taxes and utility costs a cornerstone of his program.

“As a matter of fact, Mississippi’s electricity cost is 10 percent lower than the national average. Gov. Bryant and I ensure that Japanese com-

panies that are already in the state are winning, both human resources-wise and cost-wise,” McCullough said.

“We’re proud to be the home of both Toyota and Nissan assembly plants. Their recent expansion means more confidence in doing business here. And we welcome more Japanese companies in Mississippi, where they can take advantage of monozukuri (manufacturing) excellence in America,” he also said. ■

→ mississippi.org/automotive



Mississippi Development Authority Executive Director Glenn McCullough, Jr.

mississippi development authority

MISSISSIPPI

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MISSISSIPPI DRIVEN

mississippi development authority

MISSISSIPPI

Topre America

Creating the future of the automobile

FLORIDA

MIA: THE GATEWAY OF THE AMERICAS

Located in south Florida, **Miami International Airport (MIA)** is one of the country's busiest airports, accommodating more than 100 carriers, offering more flights to Latin America than any other airport in the United States and serving 60 percent of all international visitors to Florida.

Having handled a record-breaking 45 million passengers last year, MIA is focused on improving its facilities, operations and route network in order to become one of the world's top passenger and cargo terminals.

"We are looking at all angles. We're revamping terminals and using advanced biometrics at security checkpoints to give passengers a better experience. For the airlines, we are looking at different strategies to decrease the cost per passenger and employee," MIA Director and CEO Lester Sola said.

For its long-term growth, MIA recently gained local approval for a multi-billion-dollar



HEERY T&G

Having handled 45 million passengers in 2018, Miami International Airport is among the busiest gateways in the United States.

capital program designed to modernize and expand its concourses, as well as add two new airport hotels.

As tourism and business continue growing

in the southern United States, MIA has recognized the increasing importance of Asia, particularly Japan, to its operations. Every year, approximately 40,000 passengers pass through the airport on their way to and from Japan.

"A lot of these travelers are from Latin America and take multiple connecting flights to reach Japan. With Miami being the gateway to those countries, there's definitely a market for a direct flight between the region and Japan," Sola said.

Because of its strategic location, MIA also handles more than \$400 million in cargo annually to and from Japan.

"Our trip to Japan back in 2018 showed us that our focus should be on the Japanese market. We would love to establish a direct service with Japan and look forward to building partnerships with them," Sola said. ■

→ www.miami-airport.com

POWER GENERATION THROUGH INNOVATION

As its parent company secured global market share leadership for heavy-duty gas turbines last year, **Mitsubishi Hitachi Power Systems Americas, Inc. (MHPS Americas)** is not resting on its laurels. Since the formation of the joint venture of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. and Hitachi Ltd. in 2014, MHPS Americas has seen its profits grow.

"The industry is very competitive. We have strong competitors such as GE and Siemens, which have been in the market for a long time. To achieve what we have in just four years is an accomplishment we are very proud of," MHPS Americas President and CEO Paul Browning said.

MHPS Americas gained leadership in the region because of its innovative products and customer-focused strategy. And determined to create more value for its customers, it is adopting artificial intelligence (AI) technology into its products.



MHPS

MHPS' Savannah Machinery Works is the comprehensive manufacturing, service and repair center for gas turbines, steam turbines and generator rotors.

"AI is a big aspect of the future of the company. The machines that we build require a lot of maintenance. By incorporating AI technology, these machines will be optimized to operate at the highest performance," Browning said.

MHPS Americas also plans to open the

world's first autonomous power plant in 2020. It launched a new business division, Power and Energy Solutions, which will focus on developing comprehensive solutions through technology, industry partnerships and customer collaboration.

As MHPS Americas increases its market share in Latin America, the company began hiring local staff, who are trained and supported by Japanese counterparts.

"We want to stay true to our Japanese roots, but also understand the business culture of these areas. Using this structure aligns the strengths of both cultures and allows us to properly serve our customers," Browning said.

MHPS Americas should continue to dominate the power generation market following its record-breaking profits last year and new orders expected to reach \$2 billion by the end of this year. ■

→ www.changeinpower.com/topfive

FLORIDA: THE PLACE FOR SPACE

Florida's Space Coast is experiencing a resurgence in activity. Among the top five U.S. states for aerospace employment and home to more than 17,000 aerospace-related companies, Florida's aerospace sector has contributed \$17.7 billion dollars to the local economy.

As the aerospace industry evolves rapidly, Florida has a larger mission: to be the world's top launch pad for space flight.

Space Florida, the state's spaceport authority responsible for the development of its aerospace industry, is promoting existing opportunities and developing projects that will expand the business across the state.

"There is a new space race upon us. Human space exploration is back with NASA pushing a return to the moon. Satellite technology is continually advancing in order to bring better connectivity through bandwidth speeds," President and CEO Frank DiBello said.

While Florida's aerospace industry was once largely reliant on federal funding,



SPACE FLORIDA

The first Falcon Heavy Launch in Feb 2018 from Launch Complex 39A at the Cape Canaveral Spaceport

the state has strengthened its position by developing its commercial space sector. Among the companies that have built facilities in the area are SpaceX, Blue Origin, Boeing and OneWeb.

"The future of aerospace is in public-private partnerships. Technology in the

private sector is developing at a much more rapid rate. Space is still a largely untapped market that private companies want to pursue," said DiBello.

Space Florida is making sure that it can support future growth in the industry by increasing the capacity of launch facilities, advanced manufacturing in rockets, satellites and spacecraft, improving manpower training and providing innovative financial tools.

As more aerospace companies locate to Florida, the state seeks more overseas partnerships. In 2017, several leading Japanese aerospace companies and representatives from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency attended the first Florida-Japan Aerospace and Aviation Summit.

"We're very open to work with the Japanese. Their strong presence in robotics and artificial intelligence is an area in which we see strong synergy," DiBello said. ■

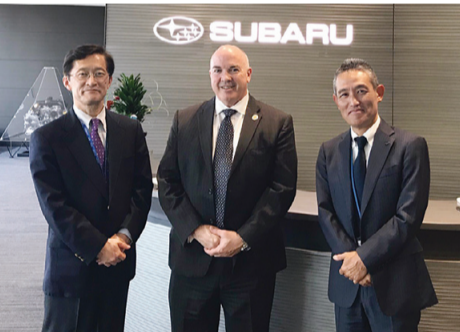
→ www.spaceflorida.gov

PASCO EDC DELEGATION VISITS JAPAN

A delegation from **Pasco Economic Development**, led by President and CEO Bill Cronin, returned to Tokyo in April to persuade more Japanese companies to invest in Florida's Pasco County, which has access to a skilled workforce of more than 1.5 million and provides the optimum location to reach both the U.S. and Latin American markets.

Founded over 30 years ago, Pasco EDC offers site location assistance, tax incentives and expedited processing of permits for companies interested in operating in Pasco County. The organization has unveiled several build-ready sites with a total area exceeding 725 hectares.

"We're one of the longest-operating



PASCO EDC

Pasco EDC President and CEO Bill Cronin meets with officers of the Japanese transportation conglomerate Subaru in Japan.

economic development organizations in the state. One of the things that makes our organization unique is our incubator program, which includes soft landing programs for international companies," Cronin said.

With its stable, pro-business leadership, Florida is ranked fourth in terms of tax climate in the United States. Companies that have moved to the state cite low operating costs and zero personal income tax as the most beneficial perks.

"Another program that is unique to our organization is the Pasco Pipeline, wherein we align workforce and employer needs with the employment workforce training agencies. We communicate with the employers so that we can easily create a program for them," said Cronin.

Through its on-the-job training grants, as well as primary and post-secondary curricula for various industries, Pasco EDC is able to attract highly qualified workers to the area. It also works closely with many innovators in industry to come up with customized solutions to build a resilient business community. ■

→ <http://pascoedc.com>

TENNESSEE

TVA: ONE UTILITY TO POWER MANY

The **Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)** has played a pivotal role in the economic history of the United States since it was formed in 1933, when the country was in the midst of the Great Depression.

Created to help spur economic prosperity in the seven-state Valley region, TVA works to provide clean, reliable, low-cost power, engage in environmental stewardship, and foster economic development.

TVA Economic Development works to attract new business and investment to the region, engage with existing industries to grow, and serve with its partners and local communities to foster economic growth.

"Our product is electricity, but the mission of TVA is to im-

prove the quality of life for the people we serve." **TVA Senior Vice President for Economic Development John Bradley** said.

TVA has garnered international attention and admiration for how it has identified appropriate sites and built infrastructure that can accommodate a wide range of industries and companies of any size.

"We have to take initiatives to make these communities successful. We were one of the few utilities that initiated product development from a standpoint of investing in communities, both through dollars and time," Bradley said.

TVA's relationship with the Japanese began in the 1980s with the entry of carmakers Nissan in Smyrna, Tennessee and Toyota in

Blue Springs, Mississippi.

"The Japanese know that if they've got to be in operation within 12-14 months, they can do that on these sites," he said.

With the predicted rise of electric vehicles, TVA has lent the right support to Toyota, Nissan and Mazda, as well as their original equipment manufacturer suppliers in the area, by providing a low-cost, reliable power supply.

"As a company, we spend a lot of time keeping prices low, while reducing carbon footprints for companies. One of the assets of the TVA region is the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, which is studying carbon fiber, a technology with a lot of potential," Bradley said. ■

→ www.tva.gov



TVA

TVA Senior Vice President for Economic Development John Bradley



A HOME IN EAST TENNESSEE

Of the more than 130 Japanese companies that do business in Tennessee and collectively represent more than \$20 billion in capital investment, three have made a significant impact on a community in the eastern portion of the state.

For the last 30 years, **DENSO Manufacturing Tennessee**, **Toyota Tsusho America** and **Koide Tennessee** have made the cities of Alcoa and Maryville a hub for auto parts manufacturing and distribution. Because of its central location (much of the

eastern United States is within a day's drive), it's no wonder the region has experienced an economic boom.

Since 1988, this trio have become outstanding corporate citizens, having invested more than \$3 billion of capital in Blount County. Together, they employ more than 6,000 people while generously donating countless dollars and hours of community service to nonprofit organizations.

Earlier this year, DENSO embarked on a \$1 billion expansion

that added 335,000 square feet to its facilities. Koide, meanwhile, will add another 30,000 square feet to its factory amid strong growth in its operations.

Many businesses choose to remain in the area as public and private research and development investment exceed \$2.5 billion every year.

Much of the credit for attracting these three Japanese companies and for the region's consistent growth is attributed to the **Blount Partnership**, an International Economic Development Council accredited organization. ■

→ www.blountpartnership.com



BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP

Blount Partnership President Bryan Daniels

MORRISTOWN PROVIDES CONNECTIVITY TO JAPANESE MANUFACTURERS

The Morristown area in eastern Tennessee has steadily grown its global reputation as a leading manufacturing center since the arrival of German-owned conglomerate BASF more than seven decades ago. Then, to diversify its economic base, Morristown began attracting automotive and advanced manufacturing companies in the 1980s.

Now home to more than 100 manufacturers, the area hosts several Japanese manufacturers, among them Tuff Torq (a division of Yanmar), OTICS, Kawasaki, San-Ei Seiko and JTEKT.

"We are partnering with the state of Tennessee in order to address our workforce challenges created by our recent growth. The Labor Education Alignment Program is one such tool that we use to make sure that manufacturers, especially our Japanese investors, are set up for success," **Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Marshall Ramsey** explained.

"The program aligns industry's needs with the curriculum taught in our education system. Our Japanese companies have been expanding throughout the years here in our area thanks to the quality workforce that make it possible to assemble high-quality goods,"

Aside from its well-established status as a manufacturing hub,



MORRISTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

East Tennessee Progress Center Industrial Park

Morristown also offers an advantageous location and infrastructure. Its industrial sites are connected by rail and several vital interstate highways, which means that goods are only a day's drive to more than two-thirds of the U.S. population.

The area is also serviced by the Norfolk Southern Railway's main line and is within one hour and 15 minutes of two regional airports. ■

→ www.morristownchamber.com

WORKING TOGETHER TO WELCOME JAPANESE INVESTORS

The Chattanooga region has displayed robust growth because of its ideal location within a day's drive of 30 percent of the U.S. population and two hours from Atlanta international airport. At the heart of this development is the **Greater Chattanooga Economic Partnership**, which extends into the surrounding areas of north Georgia and north Alabama.

"We cover a broad region. From an investment perspective, one of the biggest investors is Komatsu from Japan, which

has almost 400 employees now," **Vice President of Economic Development Charles H. Wood** said.

The Greater Chattanooga area has attracted \$7 billion dollars in foreign direct investment over the last 10 years. And major Japanese companies, including Shiroki, Kobayashi Healthcare and Nissan Brake, have all expanded their operations in the region.

Complementing those goals, the **Southeast Industrial Development Association** helps

in identifying potential industrial sites for companies looking to establish operations in the region.

"We cover 22 counties across three states and at times, we step in to fill the role of the local economic developer. Japanese companies are very much community contributors that play an important role as corporate citizens," **Executive Director Beth Jones** said.

Another organization that has contributed to this endeavor is the **McMinn County Economic**

Development Authority in Tennessee.

"We have more than 600 acres of publicly owned manufacturing sites, 100 acres of which are located next to Denso Manufacturing of Athens TN, our largest employer with over 1,700 associates. McMinn County has a strong automotive cluster, and we are looking to diversify our industrial base." **Executive Director Kathy Price** said. ■

→ www.greaterchatt.com

→ www.seida.info

→ www.makeitnmcminn.org




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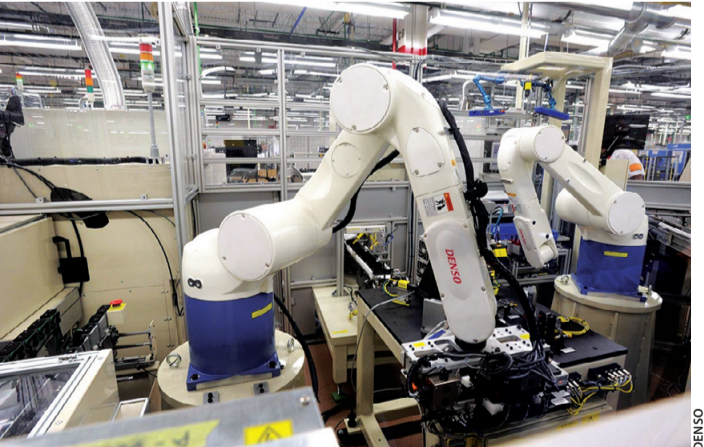
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Robots in the Denso facility in Tennessee



Denso's facility in Athens, Tennessee

A GLOBAL BRAND WITH A SIGNIFICANT LOCAL IMPACT

Eighty-eight years since its founding in Japan, Bridgestone Corp. has become the world's largest tire manufacturer, with 180 production and R&D facilities in 27 countries. Among the many milestones that propelled the Japanese company to its current position was its merger with Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. in 1988.

In 2018, approximately one out of every four passenger cars sold in the United States and Canada were rolled out with Bridgestone or Firestone tires. From its 30-story headquarters in downtown Nashville, Bridgestone Americas employs 2,200 people in the city alone, while across the U.S., Bridgestone Americas employs more than 38,000 people.

"We also saw real strength in our commercial truck and bus radial tires. They were up 9 percent year-on-year, which is strong, particularly in a relatively large, but mature market," Bridgestone Americas CEO and President Gordon Knapp said.

In 2018, Bridgestone Americas announced a three-year, \$40 million expansion



Bridgestone Americas CEO and President Gordon Knapp

of its truck and bus radial tire manufacturing facility in Morrison, Warren County, Tennessee in anticipation of growing demand. The company also performed very well in the sales of its off-road, construction and mining tires, many of which are produced in Trenton, Aiken County, South Carolina.

"The Bridgestone Aiken County Off-Road Tire Plant is absolutely critical to our growth. Four years ago, it wasn't producing any giant mining tires. Now, it's a key

contributor not only in North America, but also globally, as we export those tires around the world in coordination with Bridgestone in Japan," Knapp said.

Over several years, Bridgestone has consistently raised its investment in its original equipment technology to support its efforts to further boost sales. Through this, the U.S. affiliate company expects to see stronger sales of replacement tires, particularly those made in its Aiken County, South Carolina and Wilson County, North Carolina plants.

Focusing on efficient solutions for mobility, another factor of Bridgestone's global leadership is the group's underlying commitment to research and development.

"Our success is a reflection of our investments over a long period of time. It also reflects strong global coordination by our Bridgestone Americas team with other regions around the world," Knapp said.

As a result of nearly \$1 billion annually invested in R&D, Bridgestone has produced new products and technological value-added innovations, such as high rim diameter tires and run-flat tires.

"More than a decade ago, tires were between 15 and 16 inches in height. Today, Bridgestone produces larger passenger tires with heights of as much as 18 to 22 inches. Meanwhile, our run-flat tires will continue to run for up to 50 miles after a flat tire occurs, giving drivers a chance to safely extend their mobility," Knapp said.

These trends can mainly be seen in North America and

Europe.

"We have nurtured our assets and advantages over time to build the largest automotive retail chain in the world. We have more than 2,200 retail outlets in the U.S. mostly under two brand names: Firestone Complete Auto Care and Tires Plus. This is where consumers have access to new tires and a whole array of automotive services. This allows us the great advantage and opportunity to know our customers closely," he said.

Another source of pride and a point that Bridgestone Americas has promoted in the region is that Bridgestone Corp. recently finalized partnerships with Toyota and with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) to explore tire development for vehicles in its lunar mobility project.

"It's not just about taking a tire that performs well. A tire that performs well in the extreme environments both hot and cold requires a much more complex understanding of why they work when in contact with the driving surface. We're really proud to have been invited to participate in this project," Knapp said.

To strengthen brand awareness, Bridgestone engages consumers through a variety of highly-visible sports partnerships that include the National Football League, the National Hockey League and the PGA TOUR.

As a Worldwide Olympic and Paralympic Partner, Bridgestone also plans to be incredibly active around the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Games in its global hometown. Additionally, the company manufacturers tires



Bridgestone is committed to building a workforce that is as diverse as the customers it serves.

for open-wheel racing through its Firestone brand, which serves as the sole tire supplier for the NTT IndyCar Series and the iconic Indianapolis 500.

Closer to home and among many partners, Bridgestone adopted the non-profit organizations United Way and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America as major beneficiaries of its philanthropic efforts.

"We work closely with these two world-class charitable organizations and take a lot of pride in supporting them," Knapp said.

"We're very fond of, and very happy to be in, Nashville. We're committed to the community and the people. We feel that Nashville and the South is a great place to do business and we rest very well every night knowing we have made this our home," Knapp also said. ■

→ www.bridgestoneamericas.com/en/index



Truck and bus tire plant operated by Bridgestone in Morrison, Tennessee, employs 1,040 employees and produces 9,150 tires per day.



Bridgestone Athlete Ambassador Mami Tani (Para triathlon)



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