

GM announces jobs, electric vehicle after Trump criticism

March 22 2019, by Mike Householder And Tom Krisher



This April 26, 2017 file photo shows a Chevrolet sign at a Chevrolet dealership in Richmond, Va. Less than a week after a series of critical tweets from President Donald Trump over an Ohio plant closure, General Motors is announcing plans to add 400 jobs and build a new electric vehicle at a Michigan factory. The company said Friday, March 22, 2019, it will spend \$300 million in Orion Township to build a Chevrolet vehicle based on the battery-powered Bolt. (AP Photo/Steve Helber, File)

Less than a week after a series of critical tweets from the president over

an Ohio plant closure, General Motors is announcing plans to add 400 jobs and build a new electric vehicle at a factory north of Detroit.

The company says it will spend \$300 million at its plant in Orion Township, Michigan, to manufacture a Chevrolet vehicle based on the battery-powered Bolt.

GM wouldn't say when the new workers will start or when the new vehicle will go on sale, nor would it say if the workers will be new hires or come from a pool of laid-off workers from the planned closings of four U.S. factories by January.

The company also announced plans Friday to spend about another \$1.4 billion at U.S. factories with 300 more jobs but did not release a time frame or details.

The moves come after last weekend's string of venomous tweets by President Donald Trump condemning GM for shutting its small-car factory in Lordstown, Ohio, east of Cleveland. During the weekend, Trump demanded that GM reopen the plant or sell it, criticized the local union leader and expressed frustration with CEO Mary Barra.

GM spokesman Dan Flores would not answer questions about Trump but said the investment has been in the works for weeks. Indeed, GM has said it planned to build more vehicles off the underpinnings of the Bolt, which can go an estimated 238 miles on a single electric charge. The company has promised to introduce 20 new all-electric vehicles globally by 2023.

In November, GM announced plans to shut the four U.S. factories and one in Canada. About 3,300 workers in the U.S. would lose their jobs, as well as 2,600 in Canada. Another 8,000 white-collar workers were targeted for layoff. The company said the moves are necessary to stay

financially healthy as GM faces large capital expenditures to shift to electric and autonomous vehicles.

Plants slated for closure include Lordstown; Detroit-Hamtramck, Michigan; Warren, Michigan; White Marsh, Maryland, near Baltimore and Oshawa, Ontario near Toronto. The factories largely make cars or components for them, and cars aren't selling well these days with a dramatic consumer shift to trucks and SUVs. With the closures, GM is canceling multiple car models due to slumping sales, including the Chevrolet Volt plug-in gas-electric hybrid.

GM has said it can place about 2,700 of the laid-off U.S. workers at other factories, but it's unclear how many will uproot and take those positions. More than 1,100 have already transferred, and others are retiring.

The United Auto Workers has sued GM over the closings, which still must be negotiated with the union.

Trump's latest GM tweet on Monday said GM should: "Close a plant in China or Mexico, where you invested so heavily pre-Trump," and "Bring jobs home!"

Ohio and the area around the Lordstown plant are important to Trump's 2020 re-election bid. The state helped push him to victory in 2016, and Trump has focused on Lordstown, seldom mentioning the other U.S. factories that GM is slated to close.

Barra has said that she sees no further layoffs or plant closures through the end of 2020.

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