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NOTE: The State of Alabama is sending out a press release. This City of Athens release contains some of the same information but additional information about Jimmy Gill Park, site acreage/location, and quotes from local officials

April 10, 2019

Athens lands 400 jobs with global automotive supplier Toyota Boshoku

ATHENS – State and local officials and representatives of Toyota Boshoku America announced Wednesday, April 10, the global automotive supplier plans to invest over \$50 million to open a manufacturing facility in Athens, creating around 400 jobs once the plant reaches full production.

The new Athens factory will produce seat systems for vehicles built at Mazda Toyota Manufacturing, U.S.A., Inc. (MTMUS) is a joint venture assembly plant the automakers are constructing about 30 miles away in Huntsville-annexed Limestone County.

Toyota Boshoku is one of the first suppliers to announce plans for an Alabama facility to produce parts for MTMUS, which expects to assemble its first vehicle in 2021. The initial phases of construction on MTMUS began in November 2018 at a 2,500-acre site in Limestone County. The automakers plan to invest \$1.6 billion in the Alabama facility, where 4,000 workers will produce 300,000 vehicles annually.

"Athens attracting one of the first Tier 1 suppliers for MTMUS speaks to our city's attractiveness as a community and our great working relationship with several entities on industrial development," Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks said. "From the State of Alabama to our Limestone County Economic Development Association and our other partners, we work well together to help industries invest in our community and provide jobs for our citizens. Athens appreciates Toyota Boshoku being the latest to invest in our city."

Company representatives outlined plans during today's formal announcement at Athens City Hall

"When we began our search for a new site to build our production facility, we looked at many locations," said Dr. Shuhei Toyoda of Toyota Boshoku. "After an extensive search, we determined that Athens, Ala., is the perfect fit. We are grateful for the assistance from the State of Alabama, City of Athens and Limestone County to make this project a reality."

The Toyota Boshoku facility will be on 42 acres in the Breeding North Industrial Park on Sanderfer Road. The industrial park is south of U.S. 72 and west of U.S. 31. The company anticipates starting construction around May 1, 2019.

"Toyota Boshoku is a premier manufacturer of automotive interior systems and a welcome addition to Alabama's growing constellation of world-class auto suppliers," Gov. Kay Ivey said. "We look forward to seeing the company put down roots in Athens and know that it will find all the ingredients for success in Sweet Home Alabama."

Greg Canfield, secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce, said Alabama's economic development team worked hard to facilitate the formation of the supply chain for MTMUS.

"Toyota Boshoku's decision to locate in Athens will add momentum to our efforts," Canfield said. "We expect to develop a long-lasting partnership with this outstanding company as it creates well-paying jobs in Alabama."

The industrial site includes the current location of Jimmy Gill Park on Sanderfer Road near the Hine Street intersection. Mayor Marks said the company is assisting the City of Athens in relocating the park. The late Jimmy Gill was a longtime Athens City Council member and worked with his friend David Malone to establish a city park south of U.S. 72.

City and industrial officials met with Malone and Gill's widow, Deborah, before agreeing to relocate the park. Both said the late Jimmy Gill would have supported new jobs as long as the city could relocate the park.

"This is a community park that is vital to our citizens' recreational needs, and we will relocate it in the same vicinity in the near future," Marks said. "I want to personally thank Toyota Boshoku for working with us to make that happen."

Athens and Limestone County officials welcomed Toyota Boshoku's investment at the Athens site.

"We are delighted that Toyota Boshoku America selected Athens in Limestone County as its latest U.S. location and its presence is making a significant enhancement to the automotive sector for North Alabama," said Tom Hill, president of the Limestone County Economic Development Association.

Rep. Danny Crawford, R-Athens, said this is an exciting time for Athens and Limestone County

"The jobs and investment in our community are so important for the continued growth that is needed for my district," Crawford said. "This is truly a great day with many more opportunities coming."

Limestone County Chairman Collin Daly added, "We would like to welcome Toyota Boshoku America to Limestone County. This \$50-million investment that will bring 400 new jobs is a testament to the strong workforce in our region that has earned global recognition."

Sen. Tim Melson, R-Florence, whose district includes Athens, sent congratulations to the city.

"I commend local and state leaders for working as a team to secure this project for Athens," Melson said. "This project benefits not only Athens but the North Alabama region."