

Ford planning a battery-electric F-150

By Ian Thibodeau (excerpt)

Detroit — Ford Motor Co. plans to launch full battery-electric F-150 and Super Duty pickups, company officials told investment analysts here Wednesday.

The Dearborn automaker has planned to manufacture a hybrid F-150 for some time. Jim Farley, Ford president of global markets, said Ford is planning more innovation with its most popular vehicle. Offering hybrid and electric variants of the pickup would protect Ford's market share in that segment from automakers like Tesla that have been vocal about plans to launch electric pickups.

"Here's what's going to happen next to future-proof that global juggernaut of commercial vehicles," Farley said. "We're going to be electrifying the F-Series, both battery-electric and hybrid. And we're doing the same for Transit."

CEO Jim Hackett in his 19 months at the helm has pushed the automaker to get new technology into some of its most popular and profitable brands. An electrified F-150 could offer more efficient torque, and outfit the pickups with better electric power to the truck bed for aftermarket additions on work vehicles.

Ford spokesman Mike Levine confirmed the plan to build a battery-electric pickup, adding that it's part of Ford's push to find ways to build customers a better truck. ...

... David Kudla, CEO of Grand Blanc-based Mainstay Capital Management LLC, said Ford might have been smart to let smaller companies like Tesla give electric vehicles mainstream appeal before setting out with their own electrified plans.

"Let Musk reap some of the joy of saving the planet and develop the market," Kudla said. "Now that it's come along, (Ford) comes in..."

Hackett and Farley said as much during the Detroit auto show.

"We were late," Hackett said Wednesday morning. "Now we think we're going to be a leader in this."

The battery-electric and hybrid vehicles in addition to adding performance to some Ford models will protect the lineup against any unexpected rise in gas prices, according to Ford officials.

"No transition is perfect," Farley said Tuesday evening at Automotive News World Congress. "In a way, we had the advantage of watching what happened the first time around. (Customers) want really good stuff."

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