

The History and Importance of the Automotive Industry in SSMRC's Central Region

Automotive assembly and manufacturing plants are a significant producer of man-hours within the SSMRC Central Region. Within the region, we have nine major auto-assembly plants that include: Nissan in Canton, Mississippi; Nissan in Smyrna, Tennessee; GM in Spring Hill, Tennessee; Toyota in Blue Springs, Mississippi; Honda in Lincoln, Alabama; Hyundai in Montgomery, Alabama; Volkswagen in Chattanooga, Tennessee; Mercedes Benz in Vance, Alabama; and a Toyota-Mazda plant under construction in Huntsville, Alabama, that will begin operations with production year 2021.

Tennessee, known as "Car Country USA," has been the top state in automotive-manufacturing strength for five of the past eight years, according to Business Facilities Magazine. Transportation equipment is Tennessee's top export – accounting for 22.8% of the state's total exports.

Prior to 1993, the automotive industry was non-existent in Alabama. Then Mercedes-Benz built its first passenger-vehicle factory outside of Germany in Vance, Alabama. Toyota, Honda, and Hyundai followed Mercedes into Alabama, producing more than 1.6 million automotive engines and 10 different passenger-vehicle models in 2019. The manufacturing-assembly plants account for 40,000 jobs within the state. Alabama is No. 3 in the United States in terms of auto exports, housing more than 200 tier 1 and 2 auto suppliers.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, manufacturers have shut down auto plants temporarily. This has allowed some of our partnering contractors to perform maintenance work with skeletal crews.

–Jeff Smith, Director, SSMRC Central Region