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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

Delaware Company Receives Grant to Produce Electric Vehicles

Award is part of Markell's vision for environmentally friendly economic development; latest in efforts to create jobs, promote climate prosperity

NEW CASTLE (Feb. 17, 2009) – One day after announcing Delaware's participation in a landmark climate prosperity project, Gov. Jack Markell on Tuesday awarded a workforce training grant to AutoPort Inc. that will allow the company to begin converting gasoline vehicles to electric vehicles in the First State.

The conversion of electric vehicles has the potential to create jobs in the long-term and is an example of how Delaware businesses can adapt to the new energy economy. Environmentally conscious customers wanting to purchase cars that do not pollute and that reduce America's dependence on foreign oil present new markets for Delaware businesses.

The Markell administration awarded the grant to AutoPort to get the company's automotive workers trained in assembling and handling high-power electric components for electric cars. This is a first step toward establishing an electric vehicle industry in Delaware and a first step in Markell's climate prosperity initiative.

"Delaware must have a public policy that places sustainability at the forefront of our economic development efforts," Markell said. "When I was a kid, we worried about how many people we could squeeze into our car. Now, we worry about how many miles per gallon we can squeeze out of our family vehicles to protect our beach towns from global warming. Our economy needs to keep up with these changing attitudes, and my administration is committed to keeping Delaware on the leading edge of the Green Economy. We must encourage companies like AutoPort to train their workforce to produce sustainable products if we are going to meet the significant economic and environmental challenges facing our state."

Specifically, the funds will pay for AutoPort employees to travel to a California manufacturer for hands-on training in producing electric vehicles, and for technicians from the California plant to then come to AutoPort to assist in the making of electric vehicles. The funding comes from the Delaware Economic Development Office's Blue Collar Grant program, which helps Delaware businesses train their workers in specialized skills.

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“Despite tough economic times, it’s important to invest in companies like AutoPort that continue to rely on a stable, experienced workforce to make their businesses successful,” DEDO Director Alan Levin said. “Our Blue Collar Grant Program ensures Delaware’s workforce is equipped with critical skills in today’s business world and helps our state’s employers improve bottom line performance.”

New Castle-based AutoPort, according to DEDO analysis, contributes \$4.5 million to the state’s Gross Domestic Product and employs approximately 70 people. The company, founded in 1981, is a leader in the auto-processing and vehicle-modification industries.

“AutoPort wants to thank the Governor for allowing us to be a part of this green initiative in the state of Delaware,” said AutoPort President Roy A. Kirchner. “We look forward to helping move our country toward energy independence and a cleaner environment.”

On Monday, Markell announced that Delaware was the only state participating in a national project that places sustainability and environmental health and welfare squarely at the center of economic development efforts. The Climate Prosperity Project, sponsored by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Global Urban Development, seeks to demonstrate that innovation, efficiency and conservation of resources are the best ways to create jobs and increase incomes, productivity and competitiveness. Project participants will develop best practices and provide expert advice for pilots that are pursuing environmentally sustainable economic development strategies.

Markell last year released a Climate Prosperity strategy that aims to make Delaware a leader in sustainable economic development. The state will implement strategies that reduce energy costs for businesses, making them more competitive, and for homeowners, returning dollars to the local economy. It will also implement strategies to help Delaware’s existing businesses become participants in the green economy, and it will create a workforce trained to power green industries in Delaware, such as electric-vehicle manufacturing and the constructing of parts for wind turbines.

About DEDO

The Delaware Economic Development Office is an executive state of Delaware agency responsible for attracting new investors and businesses to the state, promoting the expansion of existing industry, assisting small and minority-owned businesses, promoting and developing tourism and creating new and improved employment opportunities for all citizens of the State. DEDO is a Certified Economic Development Organization, accredited by the International Economic Development Council. Visit dedo.delaware.gov.

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