

Toyota to spend \$100 million at A2 facilities

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By STEFANIE MURRAY

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Toyota Motor Corp. will establish its new Toyota Research Institute of North America at its existing Ann Arbor facilities this year and plans to spend \$100 million on advanced research activity here over the next four years, the automaker announced today.

The news comes as the Ann Arbor-based Toyota Technical Center, which now employs 1,000 people, prepares to move into its new \$187 million facility in York Township in late summer. The new research institute will be located in space vacated by the technical center.

Toyota already employs 35 researchers and staff that will comprise the new research institute, said Bruce Brownlee, senior executive administrator of external affairs for the technical center. Another 10 researchers will be hired this year and an additional 20 by 2010.

"Basically it will be collaborative research with partnerships in North America with universities and national labs," Brownlee said. "The areas we are really working on are energy and the environment, mobility infrastructure ... and safety."

Toyota does not plan to add any additional facilities to its 100-acre, 500,000-square-foot campus in north Ann Arbor, Brownlee said.

Toyota's new technical center in York Township is set to open in late summer.

Brownlee said the company will move over half of its current 1,000 employees to York Township, where engineering design functions will be concentrated. The rest will remain at facilities in Ann Arbor, which will continue to focus on powertrain development and other engineering activities.

The Toyota Technical Center is a division of Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America, which itself is underneath the Japan-based Toyota Motor Corp.

When Toyota announced its plan to build the new York Township technical center a few years ago, the company employed 700 here and said it planned to hire another 400 by the time the new facility opened in 2008. Brownlee said the company is still on track to reach that goal.

The new research institute will be run by Noboru Kikuchi, a mechanical engineering professor at the University of Michigan who is also a director of the Toyota Central Research & Development Laboratories Inc. in Japan.

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