

# Toyota to add crash-test unit

## Site means \$37 million addition to York Twp. engineering facility

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Toyota Technical Center USA Inc. confirmed that it will add a crash-test unit to its York Township facility about to break ground, making it the first company-owned crash-test site in North America.

The facility will mean a 180,000-square-foot, \$37 million addition to the project.

While the expansion won't add any extra jobs, it represents the continued expansion at the 690-acre site, as expected.

Already announced for the site is a 400,000-square-foot engineering and design facility that would house 400 new employees. Of those, 127 already have been

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hired and are working in Toyota's existing technical center in Ann Arbor Township. The facility will break ground Friday.

The additional facility will be used to crash cars and see how they react in accident conditions. Automakers frequently show videos from crash test facilities in commercials to promote safety features of their vehicles.

Toyota leases a test facility in the U.S., but doesn't have one

of its own in this country. This expansion will bring more of Toyota's development capability to North America, where more and more vehicles are being designed and built.

"They are moving more of their R&D outside of Japan," said David Cole, chairman of the Center for Automotive Research, based in Ann Arbor. "Obviously, Ann Arbor is a big part of that."

Cole said the company rarely announces plans for expansion that it might build - only what it will build.

"They don't want to be put in a position where they feel like they have promised to do something that they might not end up doing," he said.

Toyota bought the land from the state of Michigan this spring for \$11 million. It was the site of the Ypsilanti Regional Psychiatric Hospital. The old hospital has been razed and the grounds are being prepped for new construction.

The total planned investment in the site now stands at \$187 million after this announcement.

The massive site at US-23 and Willis Road has room for many more expansions.

Bruce Brownlee, senior executive administrator of external affairs for the technical center, said the company will announce future expansions at the site as needed.

He said the crash-test facility expansion still needs approval from the York Township Board of Trustees.

Toyota already has about 750 people working at two sites, primarily at its Ann Arbor Township facility, off of Earhart Road. Engineers and designers are responsible for creating vehicles like the new Toyota Tundra truck and Avalon sedan.

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