News Release

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Plastics Makers Announce Strategic Framework to Help Automakers, Suppliers Achieve Fuel Efficiency Standards through Vehicle Lightweighting

Plastics and Polymer Composites a Major Part of Solution

Detroit, MI (April 8, 2014) – At the Society of Automotive Engineers’ 2014 World Congress & Exhibition, the American Chemistry Council’s Plastics Division today released an updated roadmap that will help automakers and their suppliers dramatically enhance fuel efficiency in vehicles through the adoption of plastics and polymer composites to achieve significant weight reductions.

The Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) joint standards set by the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency require automakers to achieve more than 50 miles per gallon in auto fleets by model year 2025 – arguably the most influential force in the North American automotive market today.

Plastics and polymer composites offer extraordinary opportunities for lightweighting. For example, plastic carbon-fiber-reinforced composites are 50 percent lighter than conventional steel and 30 percent lighter than aluminum. Plastics already provide exceptional strength-to-weight ratios in addition to design flexibility. Wide scale adoption of plastics and polymer composites will be critical to helping auto makers meet the new CAFE standards.

The new roadmap, “Plastics and Polymer Composites Technology Roadmap for Automotive Markets,” calls for a series of industry-wide, collaborative demonstration projects to generate data, establish predictive models and develop specifications that will improve the manufacturing and assemblage of new high-performance parts. These pre-competitive, cooperative efforts are aimed at helping plastics and polymer composites suppliers enhance the properties of their materials and improve production efficiencies to accelerate innovations. This will enable automakers to meet and in many cases foster higher performance and sustainability for cars of the future.

“The route laid out in our updated roadmap establishes a realistic, achievable path that will enable plastics and polymer composites suppliers to quickly and effectively meet the evolving needs of the automotive industry,” said Matthew Marks, chair of ACC’s Automotive Team (SABIC). “We look forward to building on our history of strong collaboration to help bring about innovative lightweighting solutions that will dramatically save weight, enhance automotive fuel efficiency, performance and value, all while maintaining safety.”
To develop the latest roadmap, ACC’s Plastics Division, which represents leading U.S. makers of plastics, and polymer composite elements, worked closely with the automotive industry, research community, and federal regulatory agencies. The latest roadmap reflects significant changes in the automotive marketplace and regulatory environment since the first roadmap was published in 2001.

“Plastics and polymer composites specialists are excited to begin working with this new roadmap,” said Gina Oliver, senior director of the Auto Team at ACC’s Plastics Division. “We look forward to supporting and contributing to a culture of collaboration up and down the automotive value chain, together with the research community and federal regulators, to take full advantage of the potential benefits that may be realized from the use of plastics and polymer composites.”

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About the Plastics Division
The American Chemistry Council’s Plastics Division represents leading companies engaged in the manufacture of plastics. We’re dedicated to providing innovative solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow through plastics. Ongoing innovations from America’s plastics makers have led to medical advances and safety equipment that make our lives better, healthier and safer every day. And, advances in plastics are helping Americans save energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and decrease waste. Because plastics are such a valuable resource, the Plastics Division is leading efforts to “reduce, reuse, recycle and recover,” including through outreach, education and access to advances in recycling technology:

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The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care®, common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues, and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a $770 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is one of the nation’s largest exporters, accounting for twelve percent of all U.S. exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation’s critical infrastructure.