

## HOW MICHIGAN CONNECTS MOBILITY STARTUPS AND THE AUTO INDUSTRY

The state of Michigan is helping mobility-related startups launch their businesses and connect with potential carmaker and supplier customers through an innovative new program called the PlanetM Landing Zone. The initiative provides participating companies with inexpensive office space, assistance in organizing and structuring their operations, and tools to help them find customers.



Seun Phillips

Opened in downtown Detroit in October 2017, the Landing Zone is a partnership involving the Michigan Economic Development Corp., Detroit Regional Chamber and WeWork Detroit. The Landing Zone is heavily supported by MEDC's PlanetM, which showcases and further develops Michigan's expertise and unequalled assets in advanced mobility technologies, services and products. PlanetM Director Seun Phillips explains.

### What is the underlying mission of the PlanetM Landing Zone?

Our goal is to attract and connect mobility-focused startups in Michigan's automotive and economic development ecosystem. The facility provides subsidized and flexible working space for startups that enables them to physically coexist with representatives from major car companies and suppliers.

The Landing Zone organizes networking events to connect startups with the established auto industry. In addition, the facility links startups with industry experts who can help accelerate business development and growth with the automotive sector. Finally, the program also shows startup companies how they can grow by tapping into local economic development programs.

### Is the Landing Zone specifically for Michigan-based startups?

Not necessarily. One of our participants is a company that began in New York City but relocated to Detroit to better pursue the auto industry. We also host companies that may be established in another state but want to expand into Michigan.

### How will you measure the success of the Landing Zone program?

Our primary focus is on deliverables and results, including the creation of jobs. Michigan is home to the world's greatest concentration of transportation-related development facilities, technology centers, manufacturing know-how and production capacity. We want companies, especially in the mobility space, to recognize that Michigan is a great place in which to do business.

Michigan has the greatest concentration of carmakers in the world, with 16 located in the state. More than half of the 100 biggest automotive suppliers to North America are based in the Detroit area. There are more than 2,200

transport-related engineering design and testing facilities in Michigan. These facilities are supported by more than 120,000 transportation engineers and technologists—the largest such concentration anywhere in the nation. We also outrank all other states in the number of patents in the mobility sector.

Michigan was the first in the U.S. to legalize self-driving vehicles, including those used by ride-sharing services. In addition, there are 49 connected-vehicle projects under way here, again more than in any other state. Two months ago, we opened the American Center for Mobility, a 500-acre all-season test facility outside Detroit for the development and evaluation of autonomous and connected-vehicle technologies.

### How many companies can the Landing Zone accommodate?

We have a 65-desk space that occupies one floor of the 10-story WeWork Merchant's Row building in the heart of downtown Detroit. We attracted 10 startups in less than three months, and there is room to handle as many as 20 companies during this first year of operation. We've been growing at a faster pace than we expected, so we're already looking at potential next steps to expand the ecosystem.

### How do carmakers and suppliers connect with Landing Zone users?

They have the ability to establish a satellite "office" within the Landing Zone facility itself. Ford and Bosch are doing this now. This enables them to quickly become aware of new ideas and products and pursue possible partnerships with startups at an early stage.



### What do MEDC's partners in the Landing Zone contribute?

The Detroit Regional Chamber has two programs that support the Landing Zone. Destination Detroit helps attract businesses, investment and jobs to the 11 counties that define southeast Michigan. MICHauto is an auto industry association of more than 120 members whose objective is to promote, retain and expand Michigan's automotive and advanced mobility industry.

WeWork specializes in providing workspace for startups in multiple industries. The company supports more than 130,000 members worldwide through physical locations in 52 cities and 16 countries.

### Where can startups learn more about the PlanetM Landing Zone?

Details about the initiative and how to apply, partner and connect can be found by clicking [HERE](#) or visiting our website at <https://www.planetmlandingzone.com>.