

2020 Chicago Auto Show: Toyota Press Conference, Ed Laukes Remarks

February 06, 2020



Good morning, Chicago! How's everyone doing? Good? Cold? Both?

February never gets any warmer here does it? Well it's not only February, it's also the first big show of the 2020 season, and I couldn't be happier that we get to kick things off, right here in Chicago.

As I mentioned during the MAMA breakfast this morning, it's always great to be in my stomping grounds in the Midwest. This area has made me who I am today.

I grew up here, went to DePaul University down the street and spent many years of my Toyota/Lexus career in this Region.

On the same note, Chicago might also be the death of me, thanks to my beloved Bears. Thank God for the Blackhawks and their success and their three recent Stanley Cups.

Needless to say, my passion for sports has led to some damaged TVs over the years. My wife calls it insanity, I call it fandom. Either way ... I guess it could be worse.

For those of you from Detroit who follow the Lions or Redwings ... I'm sorry.

In all seriousness, though, I'm also very passionate about this industry and of course Toyota.

Which is why I'm so excited to be up here today. We had a fantastic close to 2019 capping off our year with the start of sales for the 2020 Highlander.

And I'm excited to share that the all-new Highlander Hybrid started production in Indiana this week. You know the Highlander nameplate isn't just hard-hitting, it's a standout leader in Toyota's lineup.

Almost think of it as the Dick Butkus or Brian Urlacher for our team.

But seriously, it's at the top of a segment that is now over 24 models strong. And with that level of competition, we wanted to kick off this year with a bang. Which is why the 2020 Highlander was the hero of our Super Bowl ad on Sunday.

Let's take a look.

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Pretty good, right? The response to this all-new Highlander has been amazing. Customers are loving all of the features that it offers.

All-wheel or Front-wheel drive for every model? Check.

Hybrid Front-wheel drive a first in its segment? Check.

Hybrid with Best-in-class fuel economy and over 600 miles of range?

Check and Check. 600 miles – that's enough to get from here to...well ... any place that's warm.

So even though Highlander has only been out for a month ... we're already taking it to the next level. I'm excited to reveal for the very first time the all-new 2021 Highlander XSE.

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And there you have it. Pretty nice, huh? As you've seen over the past few years the XSE models such as Camry, Avalon, RAV4 and Corolla, bring dedicated styling and performance.

This Highlander XSE achieves just that, bringing a sleek exterior styling package that promises to turn heads.

Rocker panels, a sportier grille, blacked-out accents. Not something you'd expect on a Highlander, right?

Check out these new 20-inch wheels, exclusive to the XSE. Also, you'll see twin-tip exhaust, a Highlander first.

Moving to the inside, this vibrant red interior immediately catches your attention. This is the boldest interior we've ever offered in a Highlander.

When looking at performance, the XSE has an all-new sport-tuned suspension and Dynamic Torque Vectoring on the all-wheel drive powertrain. It will be the best handling Highlander ever.

This Highlander XSE is the full package and now helps round out the complete portfolio. I'm happy to share that it will go on sale fall of this year.

Now, in case any of you missed our news from last night, we have three new Nightshade models.

You can see the 2021 Toyota Tacoma, Tundra and Sequoia Nightshade Editions right out here. Now offered on eight of our nameplates, Nightshade continues to drive enhanced styling across the Toyota portfolio.

Like the 4Runner Nightshade already in market, these additions carry premium features and will come equipped with black painted wheels, a darkened chrome grille, blacked-out exterior badging ... and more.

Later this summer, our truck and Sequoia enthusiasts can now "Own the Night," so to speak.

Of course ... we want them to "own the day" as well.

You see, truck and SUV owners need versatility in the vehicles they drive. They want a commuter and a hauler – plenty of performance but also plenty of practicality for camping, hiking or even a simple weekend getaway.

So with these customers in mind we designed our new Trail Special Editions. Starting with the Tacoma, the first feature I'm sure you notice are the two lockable storage boxes in the bed. How cool is that? Perfect for storing tools, tie downs or fishing gear. Even better, the driver side is insulated, which makes for a perfect cooler on-the-go.

This feature is also available on the Tundra Trail Edition, which has the popular 1794 Edition grille.

All of the Trail Edition Models Feature black seating and unique tan stitching throughout the cab.

So, now that you know of some of the details, let's see them in action.

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Oh, you didn't think I'd stand up here and talk about conquering the trail without 4Runner, did you? How awesome is that Yakima rack? Standard on the Trail edition.

Continuing the theme of extra storage, the 4Runner Trail comes with a custom cooler that secures easily to the standard sliding rear cargo tray. It's removable and lockable making it the perfect companion for campsites or tailgates. And I don't know if you noticed, but the color is the same as the exterior of the vehicle.

Speaking of color, all three Trail Editions will be available in Army Green, Cement, Midnight Black and Super White.

And I'm happy to say customers can start enjoying these new offerings late summer of this year.

As you can see, it's a very exciting time for Toyota.

Overall, we could not be positioned better for a successful 2020. We've got the players, we've got the drive and we will work hard to welcome more people to the Toyota family.

These three new Trail Special Editions and Nightshade models along with the all-new Highlander XSE are sure to attract adventure seeking customers.

On behalf of Toyota, thank you for joining us today. Please enjoy your stay here in Chicago, try to get by Portillo's for a hot dog and I wish you all safe travels getting home.

Please allow photographers a few moments to get some shots before you come on the stage.

Thanks and have a great day!