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It's official: Auto show signs 5-year deal to stay at Cobo

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Cobo renovation animated fly-through: Cobo renovation animated fly-through. Gives you a virtual tour of the final renovation.

By John Gallagher

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Years of worrying that Detroit's signature auto show might leave for other cities officially ended today as the show sponsors signed a five-year deal to keep the show at Cobo Center through 2017.

"It is our way of saying, 'Detroit, we are with you,'" said Bill Perkins, chairman of the 2012 North American International Auto Show, at a contract-signing ceremony at Cobo.

Much of the credit for keeping the auto show in Detroit goes to the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority, created by state lawmakers to take control of Cobo from the City of Detroit in September 2009. Since then, the authority has embarked on a nearly \$300 million upgrade and expansion of Cobo.



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The work includes adding more loading-dock space on the rear of Cobo, which makes the set-up and tear-down of the auto show

easier and faster, and therefore cheaper for exhibitors.

The renovations also include new electrical capacity and other technical upgrades.

DADA had warned the city for years that it needed more room and other improvements to keep the show here. "Our voice was heard," Perkins said.

Larry Alexander, chairman of the Cobo authority as well as president of the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau, estimated that through 2017 the auto show would bring \$1.75 billion in economic impact to Detroit. The impact comes from what visitors spend in the city while attending the show.

First presented early in the 20th Century, the Detroit auto show moved to Cobo Center in 1961 and has operated there ever since.

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Renderings of a renovated Cobo Center Rendering received March. 2, 2011. Detroit's Cobo Center will get a dramatic \$221-million facelift as part of long-awaited plans. / tvsdesign

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