

Open Letters to Jim Farley

Last month, I printed the first installment of letters received in answer to the question, "What would you like to see in future Mustangs?" Your answers were forwarded to Jim Farley at Ford Motor Company. Not only did he read them, he shared them with Paul Randle, Mustang Chief Engineer, and his team.

Mr. Farley emailed me with a word of thanks to be shared with all of you for your suggestions. He said they were thrilled to receive the input, and that they would be NOTHING without all of you. At the recent Woodward Dream Cruise, I spoke to Mr. Farley for a few minutes. He asked if letters were still coming in and was encouraged by your response. Below are more suggestions received since the August issue went to press.

So, for those of you who haven't taken the time to send a note, please do so. I will continue to print the responses I receive, and I will also continue to sent them on to Jim Farley!

-Mary Jean

In a word: Quality in the details. Let me explain. I have owned an '86 SVO since it was new. The car has very low mileage with one repaint. What spoiled the lines were two, very cheap, rubber parts on the body panels in front of both rear wheel wells—splash guards. They rotted and are unsightly. They are not available from Ford or after-market and will have to be custom fabricated.

As they exist, they ruin the look of the total exterior. I could go on, but this is just one example of; "how cheap can we do it." I hope Ford gets the message. My other classic is an older Vette and our daily drivers are Japanese.

design embodies the absolute essence of classic Mustang design the best since the 1969 - '70 fastbacks), and should be kept "as is" for the foreseeable future. Use the untold millions needed to reskin what is now a perfect design (and might well be less so if changed) to fund an even more aggressive engine development program. By this I mean smaller displacement/higher efficiency engines capable of delivering decidedly better miles-per-gallon, while still providing driving excitement. Also continue to upgrade interior materials and color choices. Most of all, keep the selling price attractive to a wide range of customers—something that is also helped along by not making costly major design changes that are perhaps just change for the sake of change.

Chrysler has tried with the Charger and the new Challenger, but both cars are "OK" but do not capture the perfect cross between the 1960's styling and modern technology like the current Generation Mustang. And the Camaro has always been sort of a party crasher. Ford started the Pony car craze back in the '60s and did it again in 2005 and has the other auto makers trying to catch up. Once again they are late, and do they really "get it" anyway?

What do we want as Mustang owners? More of the same. I love that Guilara (Italian design) Mustang, take the cues from that car. Don't make it look too modern, but make it handle and drive like a modern car. But continue to give it the heritage of the 60's Mustangs. Like a hot rod "Deuce." Body style from 1932, engine, drive train, interior totally modern. Support MCA club shows—that is the core of the Mustang hobby. From track days to concours trailered, the commitment is the same. I think Ford representatives should be very visible and supportive of our events. Every dollar they spend in support of the hobby will come back to them many times over. Hard core Mustang people plan their vacations, weekends, and spending money around Mustang events and upgrading their ponies.

For the future Mustangs, IRS should be an option at least. Serious thought also should be given to offering all wheel drive similar to Audi's Quattro system. The Mustang would then be a true all year/ weather car and really drive like it was on rails!

I also hope Ford is not planning to spoil the looks of the Mustang—since it is the first model I might even consider trading my '66 convertible for.

First of all let Jim Farley know that the 2005-present Mustang is a home run. All the 'special' Mustangs they have created and their renewed relationship with Carroll Shelby makes this, I think, the most exciting time to be in the Mustang hobby. There is a Mustang for everyone from the GT500KR down to the base V-6 model. And the modification possibilities are endless. You are right Mary Jean, no other car has the following that the Mustang continues to have. Everyone loves the ponies, from the people who grew up in the Sixties to kids today, everyone wants a Mustang. No other car maker has a marque like that. Yes,

As a totally impressed owner of a 2005 Mustang GT, as well as many earlier Mustangs, I would like to comment that the current body

My suggestions don't have to do with the engine or the performance of the car, but I assume Mr. Farley is also interested in other suggestions.

I have a Jaguar I inherited from my uncle and one feature it has that I really like is a button you push and it tells you what the outside temperature is. (On the other hand, the Mustang does not need the four buttons above the mirror which will open any one of my four garages. Yeah, right!)

Although I think the glass roof is a great idea, many people I talk to, who do not want a convertible, would like a sunroof. And ideally, what I would like is what I think they call a moon roof. I had one on a Chrysler Concorde several years ago. There is a panel that you manually push back to reveal a glass roof. Then, if you wish, you can push a button and the glass roof will retract and be open to the outside.

If my Mustang had four wheel independent suspension, I believe the car would sell. It would be a drivers car. The Corvette has four wheel independent suspension and no one seems to be shying away from it!

Make the Mustang a little smaller. I am concerned that it is approaching 3,600 to 3,800 pounds. Way too heavy. I remember the '71 model weighing some 600 pounds more than the '70 model. That was not good and the sales results proved that up; 3,200 to 3,350 is heavy enough. I have a '97 Mustang V-6, auto, that I bought new in Dec. of 1996. Great car. Only improvement I would like to see on that car is another two inches of leg room for the driver. Have 109,000 miles on the Mustang and it has been great, gets great milage both in town and on the road (21 City and 37 on the highway).

Improve the interior quality of the current model. It looks nice; however, I am hearing negatives on the stand-up quality of some interior parts (in the area of the dash). I like the idea of the eco boost, direct injection. I am thinking of buying a 2010 Mustang V-6 with auto and might be interested in the eco-boost. Mr. Farley, make sure that this

eco-boost tech is fully developed and operational for those of us that buy that option. I would not want to find out six months later that Ford has had all kinds of problems with eco-boost. Do not bring it out until Ford is sure that it is 101% fully operational and flawless. Right at this moment my concern is the weight of the current model—it's way too bulky. That is the one point that might delay my purchase of a 2010 Mustang. Ford must communicate to the American public that their cars and trucks are a lot better than currently perceived by a many Americans. Improve the warranties six years, 72,000 miles, or higher. That communicates to the American public that Ford Quality has greatly improved, and that their engineering has developed a much better car and/or truck.

I am a huge Ford man and would never buy anything less than Ford. I talk up Ford to all my friends, most of them drive brands not built by Ford. When I start talking Ford, they just smile at me. I wish I was smarter, and could give you some more specific ideas on how to communicate and market Ford products to the American public.

I still hear comments about Ford transmissions being too weak.

I own a '67 Fastback—all restored, a '97 Mustang coupe, and a 2006 Ford E-150 van for my fishing trips to Canada.

If I do purchase a new Mustang, I will become a four Ford household.

I have a 2007 Mustang GT with the Ford Racing suspension and performance packs added. I enjoy the car in all respects, save one. The rear suspension is too stiff, ridiculously so for a car intended for street use (my sole purpose). Indeed, in a number of reviews that I have read, this particular problem is pointed to derisively; and, among other things, influences the expected longevity of the car. I am an older driver (69) enjoying a performance automobile; and, I understand that some racing purpose is served by the current rear suspension. Nevertheless, at the very least an IRS should

be available as an option, since I would suppose that the vast majority of Mustangs sold are exclusively employed for street use only.

My only suggestion is to make them with four wheel independent suspension. I've heard all the arguments espousing the virtues of solid rear axle vehicles, and how they won't fail at a quick acceleration at a drag race. I, for one, have never had the occasion, to have had to beat the driver next to me at a traffic light

Maybe I've bought the wrong car. My son's Focus is a blast to drive. Even my old V-dub, from decades past, was slow but could handle well. Mazda Miatas are supposed to be very good handling cars. I bought my '02 GT just because I liked its looks. (and I didn't look like a circus act, driving it)

In response to Jim Farley's greatly appreciated request, I offer the following, largely based on my experience with my 2006 Mustang GT convertible...

1. Exterior

- Please resist any stylist's desire to place retracted windshield wipers under the back edge of the hood. A tactic used on many GM cars, this introduces a world of trouble during the winter and makes more difficult the task of cleaning the windshield.

- DO NOT extend the front or rear overhang. The front is already almost BMW-esque (which is good). The rear, which determines trunk size, is adequate.

- Mustang owners like to keep their vehicles clean and waxed. To those ends, exterior styling should include few sheet metal pieces and "soft" radii. A good example is the stock 17-inch wheels on the 2006 GT; only five spokes, and those spokes are designed with rounded radii.

- Exterior mirrors are perfect in shape and size. Do not listen to those who say they are too small or too large.

- My '06 GT is free of stripes,

graphics, spoilers, or scoops. I strongly suggest that the body continued to be offered in such an uncluttered fashion.

- A "Fabric" convertible top is better than "Vinyl." Vinyl requires specific maintenance and will eventually crack and split. On my 2001 Chrysler Sebring, the fabric top looked as good as new after five years. Maintenance involved vacuuming the fabric once a month. Make "Fabric" standard.

- I'd reduce the side profile of the vehicle by one or two inches, if possible. Either by lowering the car onto the suspension or by reducing the height of the body itself.

2. Drive Train

- Fuel efficiency is the order of the day. My 2001 Chrysler Sebring contained a 2.7 liter V6, with 200 hp, that offered well in excess of 30 mpg on the highway. The base Mustang should offer the same or better. For the GT, fuel efficiency should equal or surpass that of the Corvette (bigger displacement, higher horsepower, but far better fuel consumption?). How about a hybrid?

- No complaint on transmissions. Good work.

- Accelerator responsiveness needs work. Consider "by wire" options.

3. Interior

- Yes, the majority of interior pieces are plastic—out of necessity. But Mustang interior plastic is well done. The texture and fit are impressive, and I do not suggest changes.

- During daytime, gauges are not all that visible. Especially when the driver is wearing sunglasses.

- Shiny chrome rings around gauges reflect the sun excessively. Brushed chrome would be better.

- Rotary switches for lights and HVAC controls are excellent. **DO NOT CHANGE THEM.**

- Excellent audio controls and steering-wheel-mounted controls. Do not change them.

- Optional sport bucket seats: Excellent.

- Map pockets in the door are useless. Put something in there, you'll never get it out. Better option might be pockets on the back of the front seats. Or deeper/wider door pockets.

- The rear seat is an obvious point of contention. It isn't suitable for adults, and the space would be better used for luggage. Perhaps have the rear seat easily removed. It would save weight, offer luggage space, and might improve fuel mileage.

- **DO NOT CHANGE** the dash-mounted air vents. They are perfect. And my wife agrees.

Here are my thoughts on the future Mustang. As the current owner of a '65 fastback, I would like to see styling cues from that model. It should be about the size of the BMW 1 series and retain rear wheel drive. I would like to see three powertrain options to satisfy all types of drivers. Make mine an Ivy Green coupe with a high-output 4 cylinder with a 5-speed auto tranny (wife's daily driver).

Lastly, make it so it gets 30 city/40 highway mileage—I am cheap after all. **MT**



Quality Time
the greatest gift

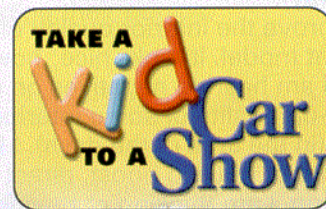
Those hands stay small for such a short time. Now's the time to lead a child down a path that could expand into a lifetime of enjoyment. Going to a car show is a history lesson, a social event and storytime all wrapped up into one!

Life is full of choices for kids. You can help them make the right ones by showing them your appreciation for cool old cars. Your passion for collector cars today may even nurture a shared interest for years to come...when those hands are as big as your own.

For more information and a list of upcoming automotive events, visit our website:

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Take a Kid to a Car Show is a program of ARMO, the Automotive Restoration Market Organization, a SEMA Council.

