Jeep, Ram kick off product renewal drive

Larry P. Vellequette
lsvillequette@crain.com

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) has slowed some product development activities while trying to hit aggressive financial targets for 2018. But before that happens, FCA will launch production of its redesigned Ram 1500 light-duty pickup, which has been a priority. Abandoning the small and midsize sedan segment opened room in FCA’s manufacturing footprint to add vehicles such as the coming Jeep Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer while continuing the resurrection of the Alfa Romeo brand. The Chrysler brand will expand beyond the Pacifica and the 300, while the Dodge Journey will transform to more closely resemble a budget Alfa Romeo Stelvio. And the ancient Dodge Grand Caravan will soldier on and on. Still, FCA’s product planning remains the must fluid of any major carmaker and is often subject to change.

WHAT DO THE TERMS MEAN?
- Freshen: Minor changes to interior and exterior, such as new grille, fascia, front and rear lights or seat surfaces
- Re-engineering: Significant engineering changes, such as revised powertrain, chassis, suspension, center stack or interior. Often includes some new sheetmetal.
- Redesign: New platform, powertrain, interior and sheet metal. Engine and transmission could be carried over.
- New: A nameplate added to the lineup

Chrysler crossovers to boost lineup

Larry P. Vellequette
lsvillequette@crain.com

Chrysler’s thin product lineup will be bolstered — eventually — with a pair of crossovers while its only sedan will stay on its current platform for another cycle.

Tipo/Neon: Fiat Chrysler Automobiles has studied importing the compact Fiat Tipo sedan into the U.S. from Europe and likely rebadging it as a Chrysler Neon. However, no plan has been announced.

200: Production of the 200 midsize sedan has ended. It will not be replaced.

300: Sources say a planned redesign of the LX-based 300 into the Giorgio platform, originally scheduled for 2020, has been scrapped. Instead, designers will do a major freshening of the 300 in 2019 in hopes of shedding weight and improving fuel economy. The addition of a turbocharged four-cylinder is a strong possibility to augment an improved V-6 to help get the job done. In the meantime, Chrysler will put a Hellcat engine in its luxury sedan in late 2018 because why not?

Pacifica: The well-regarded minivan will be freshened in 2020.

Midsize crossover: The front-wheel-drive midsize crossover, to be built at FCA’s Belvidere Assembly Plant in Illinois beginning in 2019, will share a platform with the Jeep Cherokee and have three rows of seating, similar to the Dodge Journey.

Portal: Chrysler’s electric and autonomous minivan concept received high praise when it debuted in January. FCA realizes it must get into the electric vehicle business eventually, if only to meet regulatory requirements in states such as California, and the Portal would be a competitive offering. However, there are no announced plans to move toward production.

Full-size crossover: Plans call for Chrysler to resurrect the Aspen name in 2021 for a full-size, three-row crossover on the Pacifica platform.

Jeep, Ram, and Fiats need their own significant freshening. Jeep will get a new Wrangler that the automaker set in 2014. CEO Sergio Marchionne says he plans to retire when annual financial results are posted in January 2019. But before that happens, FCA will meet with analysts in mid-2018 to lay out another five-year product and business plan. Until then, however, the automaker has some big projects to unveil involving two of its most profitable products. This November will bring production of the redesigned Jeep Wrangler, which will be bigger and more fuel-efficient following its first redesign in more than a decade. And in January, FCA will launch production of its redesigned Ram 1500 light-duty pickup, which has been a priority.

Ram 1500 light-duty pickup, which has been a priority. Abandoning the small and midsize sedan segment opened room in FCA’s manufacturing footprint to add vehicles such as the coming Jeep Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer while continuing the resurrection of the Alfa Romeo brand. The Chrysler brand will expand beyond the Pacifica and the 300, while the Dodge Journey will transform to more closely resemble a budget Alfa Romeo Stelvio. And the ancient Dodge Grand Caravan will soldier on and on. Still, FCA’s product planning remains the most fluid of any major carmaker and is often subject to change.

TIMELINE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chrysler</th>
<th>Dodge</th>
<th>Jeep</th>
<th>Ram</th>
<th>Fiat</th>
<th>Alfa Romeo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>2ND HALF</td>
<td>1ST HALF</td>
<td>2ND HALF</td>
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<td>300 Hellcat variant debut</td>
<td>Journey (wd) redesign</td>
<td>Scrambler debut</td>
<td>1500 redesign</td>
<td>500 freshen</td>
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<td>300 freshen Midsize crossover debut</td>
<td>Charger freshen Challenger freshen Durango redesign</td>
<td>Grand Cherokee redesign Wagoneer/Grand Wagoneer debut</td>
<td>2500/3500 freshen</td>
<td>500X freshen</td>
<td>Midsize coupe debut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacifica freshen Aspen crossover debut</td>
<td>Charger redesign Challenger redesign</td>
<td>Compass freshen Cherokee redesign</td>
<td>ProMaster freshen</td>
<td>124 Spider freshen</td>
<td>Giulia freshen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Chrysler 300 Stable</td>
<td>2018 Alfa Romeo Stelvio</td>
<td>2018 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid</td>
<td>2018 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid</td>
<td>4C/4C Spider freshen</td>
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