



Editorials

Boeing and Lamborghini spur state's carbon-fiber industry

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A Lamborghini Aventador displayed at the company's Seattle research lab with panels cut away to show the use of advanced composite materials. (Lamborghini)

Washington state should continue nurturing its cluster of composite-materials research and product development.

By

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WASHINGTON state's investments in higher education and the aerospace industry continue to pay great dividends.

A glamorous example is the Advanced Composite Structures Laboratory that Italian supercar manufacturer Lamborghini inaugurated in Seattle on Monday.

At the event, Gov. Jay Inslee noted that the lab grew out of University of Washington research into carbon-fiber composite materials. Those materials are now used in Boeing jetliners and Lamborghini supercars, and the companies are working together to advance the technology.

Washington should continue to nurture this promising industrial cluster and look for more ways to prepare students to find jobs in this growing field.

Lamborghini's lab may attract workers to the sector and additional companies to the region.

The lab is now a stand-alone materials-development and training facility in Seattle's Interbay industrial area. The storied carmaker is counting on it for new technology to improve and differentiate its cars.

"You will see here the future of our business," Lamborghini Chief Executive Stefano Domenicali said at the inauguration.

This is about more than making faster and better-performing luxury cars. Carbon-fiber materials are trickling down into lower-cost vehicles, making them lighter and more fuel efficient.

Propagation of this technology is benefiting Washington in multiple ways. A joint venture of BMW and SGL Group chose to build the world's largest carbon-fiber production facility in Moses Lake.

The cluster is also spawning new ventures, such as a composite-recycling center in Port Angeles that's making products from carbon-fiber scraps that would otherwise go to landfills.

Washington should be proud of its contributions to the future of transportation but should not rest on its laurels. It should aggressively pursue opportunities to attract additional manufacturers, research centers and jobs in this exciting field.

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