

# Ep.20 - Glen Stevens (Edited)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

michigan, mobility, industry, state, people, vehicle, auto industry, automotive, companies, called, talent, detroit regional chamber, grew, world, electrification, important, connectivity, fact, congestion, bit

## SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, Glenn Stevens

**A** Announcer 00:01  
Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.

**E** Ed Clemente 00:28  
Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity brought to you by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Hello, my name is Ed Clemente. I'm your host today, and it's a pleasure to have a friend as well as a key individual for the State of Michigan. Glenn Stevens, Executive Director of MichAuto and the Detroit Regional Chamber's Vice President of Automotive and Mobility Initiatives. Welcome to the show Glenn.

**G** Glenn Stevens 00:51  
Ed, it's a pleasure to be here with you. Thank you for the opportunity.



Ed Clemente 00:55

Yeah, no, no, no, you're critical for a lot of what goes on in this state. And I know you're sort of let's tie right into that. In fact, if someone bumps into you at a party and you're at a party where it's all dentists, what would you tell them you do?



Glenn Stevens 01:12

Well, first of all, I wouldn't tell him the last time I flossed, if they were all dentists.



Ed Clemente 01:17

Good point.



Glenn Stevens 01:18

So what I you know, in a nutshell, what I tell people very frequently and I'm very proud of it and I passionate about is my job's Michigan's economic future. And specifically, I work on the automotive and mobility industry, which is Michigan's signature industry. And I run what's called MichAuto, I help lead it with our team, which is housed at the at the Detroit Regional Chamber, but MichAuto's mission is to promote, retain and grow the industry we have, the auto industry and the one it's morphing into the mobility industry. And that's what I do.



Ed Clemente 01:53

And let's, you know, for the general public, let's, you know, the definition, because I remember, the word mobility didn't pop up on the horizon until maybe like, eight years ago, I don't know when it started getting big. But what exactly does mobility mean to you and your pursuit too?



Glenn Stevens 02:11

Certainly Well, there's lots of definition of it, but you know, primarily, it is about the movement of goods and people, and to some degree services, in a world using different forms of transportation with less friction. And what I mean less friction is when you have congestion, and when you have hyper urbanization, when you have, you know, climate issues, we want to make sure that things that move people and goods are moving more efficiently in the mobility space. And really, there's four key areas, which we would talk about, and that is on automation, autonomous vehicles, electrification, connectivity, and

shared use, And shared use would be, you know, an Uber or a Lyft, a train a subway scooters, it's called mobility as a service.

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Ed Clemente 03:09

You know, and the one word in there, maybe another one, but connectivity. I mean, for people in the business, kind of know what it means. But what would you tell like someone in the general public, what is connectivity?

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Glenn Stevens 03:20

Well, when you look at a vehicle, it's really one of the center parts of what we call the internet of things these days. And the reason for that is that a vehicle is literally a computer on wheels, millions of lines of code, and that vehicle interfaces with a lot of different things. And I'll give you some quick, you know, terminology. So a vehicle connects with another vehicle, that's called V2V. A vehicle connects to infrastructure, and so that might be roads, signage, things like that, that's V2I. And then a vehicle connects to other things, and that's what we call V2X. So that's what we talk about when we talk about the connected vehicle and the connectivity, but it's not just the vehicle. It's how it interacts with everything around it.

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Ed Clemente 04:07

Yeah, yeah. And I think that also includes data and obviously everything from Wayz to GPS, and to the other geographic information systems GIS too, as well.

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Glenn Stevens 04:22

Absolutely. All of those, all those things are about the connected vehicle and the connectivity that it has. You know, and it's, it's really a central central part of our life.

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Ed Clemente 04:32

Yeah, and it's funny too, because not funny, but like, I think that, you know, Detroit, at least in our minds, we live here, Michigan, we've always thought about, we take almost for granted historically. But as the world is growing the global platforms going, we do have to, even though we're still probably the epicenter for a lot of the R&D, but what is some of your challenges like as the world expands as well?

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**Glenn Stevens 05:00**

Well, one of the first challenges we had is, you know, I'm gonna go back a little bit to 2014 2015. We got, a group of us got together from an economic development standpoint and said, how do we make sure that we position Michigan not just as an automotive center, but as a center for next generation mobility development. And one of the things we have had to overcome is the perception of what Michigan and Detroit is. In fact, I personally met the Silicon Valley back in 2015. And did my own focus group. I talked to Apple, Google, Tesla, and also a company called the Atieva, which is now Lucid Motors. And I got the feedback that you know what you in Michigan, your great metal benders, but we've got the brains out here, we'll take care of the innovation. And the fact of the matter is, we do a lot of innovation here and making sure we tell that story is really, really important. So from 2014, with MDOT, MEDC, the University Research Corridor and Business Leader for Michigan, we started working on it back then.

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**Ed Clemente 06:03**

And so that was so that was the year it started MichBio, not MichBio, MichAuto, sorry.

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**Glenn Stevens 06:09**

Yeah, MichAuto is actually about 12 years old. But the Michigan Mobility Initiative of those groups of organizations, we formed that and launched it at the Mackinac Policy Conference in May of 2015. And we met every month for a while to work together to get this blueprint right for what we were going to do for Michigan and move forward. And frankly, a lot of things have happened. And they're continuing to happen. And it's good.

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**Ed Clemente 06:34**

Well, you know, and it's you sound like you really got a good handle on it. How did you get to this job? It sounds like, I know, whenever I told a few people I was going to be interviewing you, they said 'you mean the guy with the universities?' And I said, no, I don't think it's him. So you want to tell how your DNA started a little bit with Michigan.

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**Glenn Stevens 06:56**

I guess I was I was born to love the state, because my dad and mom are both from from Michigan. And my father, Glenn Stevens Sr., I'm Jr. He was the head of the President's Council of State Universities. For the second part of his career. The first part of his career was at Northern Michigan University in the administration. So I grew up in Marquette. So I

grew up in the university education, importance of talent environment. But I also saw my father run in association for for the President's Council. And so, you know, I guess it wasn't unnatural for me to evolve from my industry career to the trade association world to help start MichAuto and I did that with Tom Manganello from Warner Norcross and some other people. And we said, we need to have a voice for Michigan's auto industry, we need the governor to be in tune, we need the economic development agencies. And that's why we started it from a grassroots standpoint. And, and here we are today.

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Ed Clemente 07:56

Well, that that does help a lot. Because I mean, I ran a chamber before, knowing what an association and knowing all the parts that make up that really helps, because you have to be open minded to everybody, right? You, you can't neglect one component of that sort of ecosystem that you're developing. Right? You also mentioned this to me in a previous conversation, but you know, you keep you know, it's like, how do you brand? You know, you you kind of touched on this a little bit. But I know you said you got some specific areas you want to focus on, what are those?

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Glenn Stevens 08:31

Yes. So you know, I think when we look at the things that are, are important to the state with regards to the auto industry, so how do we position the auto industry and utilize it as a platform for diversification? That's one. So what I mean by that is, you know, the proliferation of artificial intelligence, and you mentioned it data management, and machine learning, all those are new markets. Well, guess what, they're all happening in the auto industry. So why don't we use the auto industry we have, as a platform to grow those parts of our industry. The second thing is, what's the image of the industry and what's and of the state to0? So we want the image of the industry in the state, you know, back back to that offhand compliment about being metal benders, we want to be known, because we are, as a high-tech state, a growth-oriented state, a state that that can compete with and do business with the world and a state and an industry that's inclusive. So that positioning is very important for us as an industry in the state. And then the last one is, what are the economics? And the economics are are very complicated, but the two main things are, number one, how do we make sure we have the right business climate, and how are we developing the right talent? And they are not mutually exclusive. They have to work together. It's not an either or.

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Announcer 09:55

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Ed Clemente 10:12

You've kind of touched on some of the trends, but internationally, we've had other guests who talked about when they travel, they still think of Michigan as an automotive, sort of, you know, global positioning. But as we both know, places like China, East Asia, you know, Germany, they're all changing sort of their platforms at the same time. So how do we distinguish ourselves? Is it beyond what you just said?

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Glenn Stevens 10:39

So if I go back to that original work we started in 2015 with those other organizations, we looked at four areas that the state needed to, really and we as an industry needed to focus on together was, how do we position the state? How do we develop the right policy for the industry? And for example, the development of autonomous vehicles which we've done, how do we make sure that we have the right people for the state? And then how do we make sure we have the right projects in place. So what I mean by projects are, are things like Mcity, the American Center for Mobility, or the Keweenaw Research Facility, these are physical places where testing and innovation can occur. So those four things have to work together. And they have been working together with regards to how we tell the world, what we do here and how we can do that here. But frankly, when you look at the assets of the industry here, you will find that they are unparalleled. There are 22 different vehicle manufacturers, with either their global headquarters or an R&D or Technical Center in Southeast Michigan. That's not anything you will see anywhere in the world. But but that's something we need to leverage, too.

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Ed Clemente 11:51

Yeah, yeah, you, you know it. I always tell people when I was in the legislature that they always said, we spend too much on auto, I said, you know, what, you know, many states would kill for what the auto we have here now. And that was 10 years ago. And, you know, I think people understand how that could disappear, too. Sometimes, like you said, how do you retain? How do you expand? How do you attract? And that's going to be like you said, your challenge. And you also, I should, I'm being neglectful if I didn't mention, you also serve on the Governor's State of Michigan Mobility Leadership Steering Committee. It's a mouthful, and what, what exactly is that?

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Glenn Stevens 12:34

Well, I have, I was part of Governor Snyder's steering group. And I am very, and we are very involved with supporting Governor Whitmer's administration, and in particular, and it was announced in February of last year at our conference, the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification. So the team which is led by Trevor Pawl, is doing great work. And they are carrying forward with a lot of that work that we helped start and we work very closely with them. So being able to be a resource for them and to be connected with them. I've got two people from my team that serve on working groups with with the council. And we want to make sure that the council succeeds, and and the Governor's, you know, administration goals succeed too. And but that's got to carry for for a long time for us, because this industry got us here, and it can get us there, if we make sure we evolve, and we have the talent to feed the industry.

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Ed Clemente 13:35

Yeah. And you know, and I know that it's always hard for any government to do long term planning, just because, you know, we're in a democratic society. So you know, things always change. But I think that's the value of what you're doing is that you're giving the long term strategy to how we stay in our lane and how we're open to, you know, upstream and downstream opportunities to expand it. So it actually helps out other disciplines beyond just purely automotive, right,

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Glenn Stevens 14:04

Exactly. I mean, how many times Ed, in your career, your life, and I know, I've heard it, did you hear the expression, 'We've got to diversify away from automotive.' Well, I would argue, I would argue, as I said before, that the greatest platform we have for diversification is with our auto industry, because mobility has really changed the face of transportation. Instead of an auto company contributing to global issues, an auto company now has the ability to solve global global issues. Wether it be climate, safety, congestion, all those different things. I mean, General Motors is a perfect example. They're, they're a company that's focused on zero emissions, zero congestion and zero accidents. Zero, zero, zero. Everything that they do drives that strategy. And it's really good when you look at the industry and when you look at our state. And when you look to attract talent, why wouldn't you want to be part of a company or organization that is solving global issues not contributing to them.

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Ed Clemente 15:03

Yeah, why don't you, do just a little bit give like 30 seconds at how important talent is to this equation too.

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Glenn Stevens 15:09

So there is unquestionably no, no greater thing than the need for talent and the development of talent and the deployment of talent. And for us as a state, there are some demographic challenges, as you know. We have had the lowest birth rate since 1941 again last year, we have declining high school graduation rates, we have an aging workforce, and we're very low on net migration into the state with regards to the other states. So you add those things up, those are pension pressure points. But the bottom line is, is that the companies that are here, the corporate citizens we have here, or those we might want to attract if the right talent in the digital age isn't available to them. We can't grow these companies, we can't grow this industry, we can't diversify into those other areas.

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Ed Clemente 15:56

And and I mean, you and I have talked about propulsion, versus necessarily, you know, because that's going to be a challenge. Obviously, we're heavily leaning into electrification right now. But propulsion is like almost a new term unto itself, it seems like as to how things are going to move around, right? Even if you could dive into that a teeny bit, as well as supply chain and the tiers. You know, I don't think a lot of people other states know the tier system like we do here.

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Glenn Stevens 16:27

So when you when you talk about propulsion, we used to refer to it as powertrains. In fact, General Motors was it was their division was called powertrain. But they don't call it powertrain more, they call propulsion. And so propulsion systems come in different forms, could be electric, could be internal combustion engine, it could be hydrogen, there are a variety of different natural gas. And so propulsion systems come in a lot of different ways. And certainly, we're on a fast pace towards electrification much faster than people anticipated. It's a very complex issue. And one of the things that's going to be impacted, is the number of components that go into an electric vehicle versus an internal combustion engine, you're talking about 20 versus several 100, up to 1000 different components. So those companies which are supplying the electric vehicle industry, are different in many cases than what supply the internal combustion engine. So the supply chain gets impacted. The OEM, original equipment manufacturers, is the the car companies, the vehicle companies, and then we have what's called tiers, tier one, tier two, tier three. And that's kind of like the food chain that supplies up. And 70% of the components from the

vehicle, for the vehicle, come from the suppliers, not from the OEM themselves. So if you're going to need less vehicle components in our electric propulsion system, it's going to impact that tier system. So, making sure that our companies in Michigan because the backbone of the supply chain is the small companies, making sure they evolve and making sure that we reskil those that might be displaced by new technologies is important, but also training newer technologies with our people. So they're enabled in this new industry that's evolving.

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Ed Clemente 18:20

And that gets into sort of the digitization industry 4.0 and those kind of fields, right?

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Glenn Stevens 18:26

Yeah, I mean, there's not, there's not a job that we can think about. In fact, the Brookings Institute, does a study, and they did one a couple years ago, where they took over 500 job classifications, and they compared their digital skill in 2002 versus 2016. Everything has a higher degree of digital interaction today than ever before. So our workforce has to be digitally enabled and digitally trained, and digitally proficient.

E

Ed Clemente 18:53

Well, we're down to the last question, which could be the hardest one. What is your favorite thing about Michigan? I know you, you tend to live all around the state. It sounds like, but do you have a favorite spot? Or do you have a favorite event you'd like to go to?

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Glenn Stevens 19:09

Well, Marquette is my favorite spot and in particular, McCarty's Cove, which is right on Lake Superior, right where the lighthouse is, I grew up right up the street from it, that's my happy place or my place, but there's a lot of them because the state's full of them. You know, I think in a nutshell, I like the people. I like the places and I like the four seasons in Michigan. I really do you know that the Trillium are blooming in northern Michigan right now. And that only happens once a year. And that's kind of something to look forward to. Doesn't last, but it's part of it's part of Michigan. It's part of Pure Michigan.

E

Ed Clemente 19:43

And I know at some point we'll be hearing from you in the future. You're doing your own podcast to correct?



Glenn Stevens 19:48

Well, I've got a little project that I've done and in fact, have a copy of it. Behind me is a book that I just published on pictures of Michigan. It's called Michigan Street. That's the street I grew up on and I've done it to benefit a friend of mine who has ALS and all the proceeds from that. It's kind of a labor of love and it helps Manny my friend who's battling a crippling disease with for his family. So yeah, that that, that that's what I like to do is to see Michigan and share it and it's a beautiful state and great opportunities to do that.



Ed Clemente 20:22

Well good luck in your endeavors. And it's always a pleasure. Once again, we had Glenn Stevens, Executive Director of MishAuto, and Director of the Regional, Detroit Regional Chamber as Vice President of Automotive and Mobility Initiatives. Thanks, Glenn again for doing this, appreciate it.



Announcer 20:40

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