

2019 NAIAS Highlights Drive to Develop EV Tech

FCA's Manley Says Electric Challenger 'Makes Sense'

Cadillac Brand to Lead GM's Charge for EV Powertrains

F-150 Getting Tech Engine

It looks like FCA's muscle car lineup is due for some electric upgrading.

FCA CEO Mike Manley told members of the media during the 2019 NAIAS in downtown Detroit that FCA will be building an EV Challenger in the next decade.

Manley told *The Detroit News* that the platforms that FCA is using for the company's popular muscle cars – the Charger and

the Challenger – are aging and will have to be replaced in the upcoming decade as FCA moves on.

"They can't exist as you get into the middle-2020s," said Manley. "New technology is going to drive a load of weight out, so we can think of the powertrains in a different way. And we can use

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



In the future, cars like this 2019 Challenger could have an EV engine.

Cadillac will be leading the charge in GM's development of EV technology.

The GM brand furthered its recent product blitz on Jan. 13 with the reveal of the brand's first EV, the first model derived from GM's future EV platform. The announcement was made at a special event held at the Garden Theater in Detroit to kick off the North American International

Auto Show (NAIAS). It's the company's move toward an all-electric future, said Cadillac President Steve Carlisle.

"Cadillac's EV will hit the heart of the crossover market and meet the needs of customers around the world," said Carlisle. "It will represent the height of luxury and innovation while positioning

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Cadillac showed off a rendering of the brand's first EV at NAIAS.

It's official. Ford will be building an electric F-150 pickup truck in the future.

The news was officially confirmed by Jim Farley, Ford president of Global Markets, on Jan. 16.

Speaking at the Deutsche Bank Global Automotive Conference in the MGM Grand in Detroit, Farley told the audience that Ford would "be electrifying the F-Series – battery electric and hybrid – in a move designed to 'future-proof' the F-Series franchise."

The F-150 pickup truck is the top-selling motor vehicle in the North American market. Last year, Ford sold more than 700,000 of the pickup truck. It is currently assembled in plants in Dearborn and Missouri.

Ford spokeswoman Dawn McKenzie said that Farley's statement is consistent with Ford's strategy for its trucks.

"We're constantly looking at new ways to better serve our truck customers," McKenzie said. "From new features to new

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Waymo, supplier to Detroit auto firms, will add facilities in Michigan.

Waymo Expanding in State

Another step was taken last week to make Michigan one of the centers of development of autonomous vehicle technology when the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) on Jan. 22 approved a grant to help Waymo open a facility in the state.

Support for Waymo is further evidence that Michigan continues to lead the next revolution in transportation, as well as significant community revitalization actions, said MEDC spokeswoman Kathleen Achtenberg.

In addition to supporting Waymo, the MEDC also approved grants to Magneti Marelli. These business developments will generate total private investment of more than \$26.1 million and create up to 506 jobs, Achtenberg said.

The new investments draw on the state's R&D climate and timely supply of high-skilled engineering talent and logistical resources, she noted.

"Today's projects will fuel new

economic activity across Michigan, strengthen communities, and create good-paying jobs for our residents," said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

"Michigan is at the forefront of innovation in automotive design and development, and high-tech auto companies continue to realize the invaluable assets that Michigan has to offer: high-tech engineering resources, top-notch research and design, and a highly skilled workforce."

Waymo was established in 2016 as a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc. Based in Mountain View, Calif., it's a growing self-driving technology company, Achtenberg said. The company currently has an operation in the city of Novi with approximately 20 employees.

Waymo is looking to locate its vehicle integration operations in Michigan where it will integrate its self-driving systems into the vehicle platforms of its OEM

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Ford Winterfest Lights Up Corktown Area

Just because it's cold in Detroit doesn't mean that Michiganders haven't been able to have some outdoor fun this winter.

Ford's Michigan Central Station Winter Festival opened Jan. 18 to a large crowd that braved the weather to enjoy a 3D light show on the iconic building, a night market and a first-of-its-kind exhibition of train station artifacts curated by the Detroit Historical Society.

Other family-friendly activities included live graffiti painting, face painting, fire pits with s'mores, artist demonstrations, live performances, vendor shops, community booths as well as an ice sculpture of the

train station. The 10-day festival was part of an extension of Ford's North American International Auto Show presence, said Ford spokeswoman Christina Twelftree.

Tapping into advanced 3D projection-mapping technology and old-fashioned storytelling, Ford has been able to use the 18-story train station as a canvas to re-create the station's glory days as a transportation hub, its revitalization, and its future as the centerpiece of a new 1.2-million-square-foot Corktown campus.

Along with its partners, Ford Motor Company seeks to shape the future of mobility and transportation, Twelftree said.

"We've planned the festival to coincide with NAIAS so we can give auto show guests and local residents a unique and unforgettable brand experience," said Garrett Carr, Ford global auto show and events manager.

"We're using Detroit's most famous landmark to captivate an audience through dramatic storytelling.

"Whether it's sitting behind the wheel of one of our vehicles or inviting people to see where we're going as a company, high-touch, personalized experiences like this are critical to cut through to customers in a noisy marketplace."



The Grand Central train station, currently undergoing restoration, was the center of Ford's recent Winterfest.

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Registration For Warmth Walk

Registration is now open for the Macomb Community Action 29th Annual Walk for Warmth event. The event will take place on Saturday, March 2, 2019, at Macomb Mall in Roseville, said Macomb County spokeswoman Roneeka Pleasant-Brown.

Walk for Warmth raises funds to assist low-income Macomb County residents with heat-related emergencies like paying utility bills or replacing a broken furnace. Since it began, the event has raised over \$750,000 to help ensure that local families can stay warm in their homes throughout the winter.

“It is always a heart-warming experience to help warm the homes of those in need, and there are thousands of Macomb residents who need such support each winter,” said Ernest Cawvey, director of Macomb Community Action.

“Without our community partners, such as Macomb Mall, our financial and in-kind sponsors, and compassionate community members, this event would not be what it is today.”

Most Popular Vehicle, the F-150, Has an Electric Future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

propulsion systems, we are always looking at new designs and technology that will better serve our customers.”

McKenzie said that Ford has no official timetable yet set about when the public will see the EV F-150.

Farley’s comment was part of a larger presentation on Ford’s immediate future.

“Over the last 19 months, we have worked to reshape and transform our company – sharpening our competitiveness, taking actions to improve our profitability and returns, and investing in our future. These actions support our drive to satisfy today’s customers – and those of tomorrow,” said Jim Hackett, Ford president and CEO.

Farley also shared details of the company’s major global product wave, which focuses on trucks, commercial vehicles and SUVs.

“We are now beginning to see the results of our capital shift away from traditional sedans to trucks and SUVs with new utility nameplates globally, including the Territory in China, Bronco, and a slightly smaller, yet-to-be named off-roader in North America,” Farley said. “2018 was a growth year for F-Series, especially Super Duty in North America. Transit and Ranger are now in all global markets in high volume with great potential.”

Farley also outlined actions the company is taking to reshape its regional businesses, including:

North America – In the next 24 months, Ford is refreshing 75 percent of its lineup, fortifying the company’s successful truck franchise and renewing and expanding the range of SUVs. At the same time, Expedition and Navi-

gator are posting increases in share, conquering from competition, and increasing its mix of SUVs, more in line with the overall market.

Europe – Ford is the #1 selling commercial vehicle brand in Europe. Its plan is to redesign to strengthen its competitive position, and to improve profitability and returns. The company also plans a more targeted vehicle lineup within three customer-focused business groups – commercial vehicles, passenger vehicles and imports.

China – (1) Create a solid foundation for a turnaround with the right leadership and the right products – including new Territory and Focus models.

(2) Follow through with an intense focus to improve cost structure and improve relationships with partners, including the dealer network.

(3) Introduce more than 10 new Ford and Lincoln products in China this year and more than 30 by 2021.

South America – Remain committed to the region with an optimized footprint, targeted to Ford’s strengths and focus on reducing structural costs and improving efficiency; administrative headcount reduced by 20 percent in 2018.

“We are bolstering our portfolio to capture a healthy share of higher growth and higher profit segments and partnering where appropriate to improve profitability and returns,” Farley said. “I’m very confident in our plan and our ability to execute.”

Chief Financial Officer Bob Shanks reported positive company operating results despite external challenges, including commodity costs, unfavorable exchange effects and policy changes. He also cited other factors, including a decline of business in China and higher warranty costs in North America.

“For 2019, we see the potential for year-over-year improvement in company revenue, EBIT and adjusted operating cash flow,”

Shanks said. “Our imperative to sustain an investment grade rating and a strong balance sheet remains the foundation of our business.”

“For 2019, we expect to be able to fully fund our business needs, while maintaining cash and liquidity levels at or above our target levels.”

Shanks gave other high-level guidance for 2019, emphasizing the dynamic and challenging nature of the global external environment:

- Continued GDP growth globally and in major markets, with a deceleration in the rate of growth in the U.S., Europe and China.
- Global industry sales volume expected to remain flat compared with 2018.
- Commodity costs to remain at the present level through 2019.
- Adjusted effective tax rate for 2019 to be in the low 20s – a full 10 percentage points higher than in 2018.

Manley Says EV Challenger ‘Makes Sense’

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electrification to really supplement those vehicles.”

This statement came at a time when FCA’s muscle car sales are actually increasing. Challenger sales increased 3 percent in 2018, with FCA selling a total of 66,716.

The Web site motor1.com reported that of the Mustang, the Camaro and the Challenger, only the Challenger reported higher sales numbers in 2018 compared with 2017.

New EVs will be hitting the marketplace in the near future. Steve Carlisle, head of the Cadillac brand, told reporters earlier

this month that Cadillac will take charge of EV development for GM and that Cadillac will be introducing an EV model in a couple of years.

Ford told the media during the company’s introduction of the 2020 Explorer that the SUV will also have a hybrid version.

“I think that electrification will certainly be part of the formula that says what is American muscle in the future. What it isn’t going to be is a V8, supercharged, 700-horsepower engine,” Manley said to *The Detroit News*.

Zac Palmer of Autoblog.com said that developing an EV “could finally be the push Dodge

needs to move away from the ancient platform it currently uses – a platform developed in the mid-2000s based on parts from the Mercedes W210 platform developed in the 1990s.

“Considerable updates and refreshes have been made since, but it’s still one of the oldest underpinnings in a vehicle sold in the U.S. today.”

As to the timing of more specific information about when an EV Challenger will hit the market, FCA spokeswoman Kristin Starnes said in an email that FCA is currently not in a position to comment on further product plans.

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Cadillac Brand to Lead GM’s EV Charge

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Cadillac as the pinnacle of mobility.”

The Cadillac EV’s name and additional details will be revealed closer to launch, Carlisle said. The Jan. 13 announcement is part of Cadillac’s aggressive product acceleration. Overall, Cadillac will introduce new models at the rate of roughly one every six months through 2021, Carlisle said.

GM’s future EV platform, which Cadillac will be the first to use,

will be flexible, allowing the company to respond quickly to customer preferences with a relatively short design and development lead time. The Cadillac portfolio will eventually benefit from a variety of body styles that can be spun off this architecture, said Carlisle.

The most advanced components within this platform are the drive units and battery cells, both of which are being designed for maximum usability throughout GM vehicle lineups in different countries, Carlisle said.

Andrew Smith, executive director of Cadillac Design, said that having Cadillac be GM’s leader in the development of EV technology makes sense.

“Electrification of Cadillacs allows us to take a clean sheet approach to engineering and design,” Smith said. “That’s important because it allows interior designers to decide what goes where and create simple, elegant designs for our vehicles. Our ultimate goal is to execute all our vehicle designs at levels that befit the Cadillac name.”

Musk Says Tough Times Ahead for Tesla Car Production

(AP) – Saying the road ahead was “very difficult,” Tesla’s CEO Elon Musk said Jan. 18 that the company would be cutting its staff by about 7 percent.

The electric car and solar panel maker notified its employees about the staff cuts and other plans in an email posted on Tesla Inc.’s website.

Musk said Tesla hopes to post a “tiny profit” in the current quarter but a 30 percent expansion in its workforce last year

was more than it can support.

Tesla’s shares tumbled earlier this month after it cut vehicle prices by \$2,000 and announced fourth-quarter sales figures that fell short of Wall Street estimates.

“Our products are too expensive for most people,” Musk said in the memo to staff, saying the company has to “work harder.”

“Tesla has only been producing cars for about a decade and we’re up against massive, entrenched competitors,” he said.

Musk said in a tweet in October that Tesla, based in Palo Alto, Calif., had 45,000 employees. A 7 percent cut would involve laying off about 3,150.

“We unfortunately have no choice but to reduce full-time employee headcount by approximately 7 percent . . . and retain only the most critical temps and contractors,” he said.

The company says it delivered over 245,000 electric cars and SUVs last year, nearly as many as all previous years combined. But its 2018 production fell far short of a goal set nearly three years ago of manufacturing 500,000 vehicles for the year. That goal was announced in May of 2016 based on advance orders for its mid-range Model 3, which Musk said sells for \$44,000.

Musk said Tesla plans to ramp up Model 3 production, “as we need to reach more customers who can afford our vehicles. Attempting to build affordable clean energy products at scale necessarily requires extreme effort and relentless creativity,” he said in the memo, “but succeeding in our mission is essential to ensure that the future is good, so we must do everything we can to advance the cause.”

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Michigan Grants Helping Waymo Grow Operations

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partners, Achtenberg said. The company plans to locate into a ready-to-go, light manufacturing facility space at a yet-to-be-determined location in Southeast Michigan that will support its capacity expansion plans.

"In the U.S., the auto industry is synonymous with Michigan. Auto manufacturing has created hundreds of thousands of jobs in the state and built an economic engine that helps fuel the entire country," said Waymo spokeswoman Alexis Georgeson.

"... Waymo is excited to announce that we'll grow our business in Michigan, as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) voted to approve our effort to establish our manufacturing presence to build our self-driving vehicles in the state, creating hundreds of jobs along the way."

The project is expected to generate total private investment of \$13.6 million and create 100 jobs with the potential for up to 400 jobs, resulting in a Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant of up to \$8 million, Achtenberg said. Michigan was chosen over competing sites in a number of other states.

"With recent announcements like KLA-Tencor, Samsung, and Waymo today, we continue to see increased interest in Silicon Valley companies looking to relocate or expand into Michigan," said Jeff Mason, CEO of MEDC.

Mason also determines who receives grants on behalf of the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF).

In addition to MSF support, MICHauto, an economic development initiative of the Detroit Regional Chamber, has offered to elevate Waymo's engagement and participation in MICHauto.

For information on careers with Waymo, contact <https://waymo.com/joinus/>.

"In 2016, Waymo selected Novi as the location for its first Michigan mobility development center," said Detroit Regional Partnership Vice President of Business Attraction Justin Robinson.

"Having Waymo choose to yet again invest in the Detroit region for its second mobility operation is validation of our business case as a leading global center for technology development and integration.

"We were excited to have the opportunity to compete for and win this project and value the support of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and MICHauto in helping to close this deal."

Magneti Marelli, founded in Italy in 1919, develops and manufactures high-tech components for the automotive industry and has 85 manufacturing plants, 15 R&D centers and 31 application centers in 20 countries around the world.

The company is looking to grow and invest in its North American headquarters to further strengthen its R&D, technology, and professional labor capabilities, Achtenberg said.

The company plans to expand at its facility in Auburn Hills, hiring new employees, constructing new labs and adding machinery.

"... build our self-driving vehicles in the state, creating hundreds of jobs along the way."

– Alexis Georgeson, Waymo

The project is expected to generate private investment of more than \$12.5 million and create 106 jobs, resulting in a \$1.59 million Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant, Achtenberg said.

Michigan was chosen over competing sites in a number of other states. The city of Auburn Hills has offered staff time in support of the project.

"We are honored that Magneti Marelli has chosen to continue its growth in Auburn Hills," said Auburn Hills Mayor Kevin McDaniel.

"This new investment will allow Magneti Marelli to continue developing technologies that will contribute to the advancement of mobility.

"We are excited about Magneti Marelli's reinvestment and the additional jobs it will bring to Auburn Hills."

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Chevy Hits the Bricks with LEGO Display

That's a lot of LEGO bricks. Chevrolet and students from the Oxford Community School's FIRST LEGO League and Detroit's Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary's A World in Motion Program unveiled the first-ever full-size LEGO Silverado at the 2019 North American International Auto Show just ahead of the show opening to the public.

The LEGO model is an exact life-size replica of the new 2019 Silverado 1500 LT Trail Boss, and it is the first full-size Chevy vehicle built entirely of LEGO bricks, said GM spokeswoman Afaf Farah.

The LEGO Silverado continues the partnership between Chevy and Warner Bros. Pictures that began in 2017 with "The LEGO Batman Movie" and the LEGO Batmobile from Chevrolet, Farah said.

This partnership builds on the Silverado marketing efforts that were launched by Chevrolet and General Motors earlier this month.

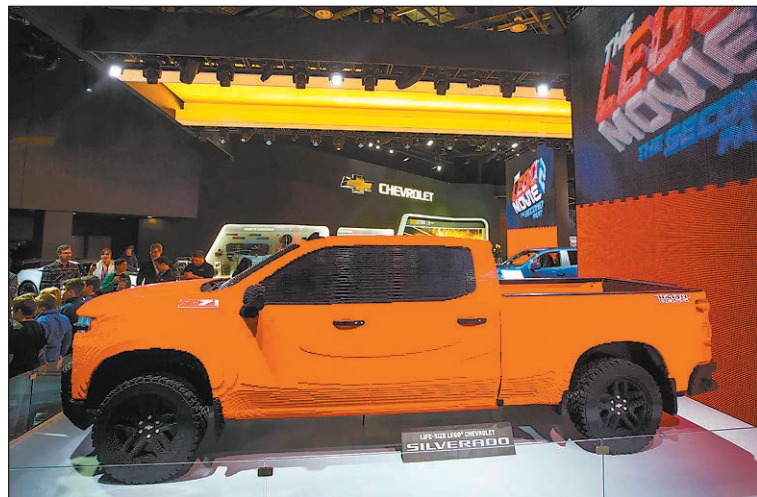
"Chevrolet is once again thrilled to be working with Warner Bros. to integrate the brand

and one of our most iconic products – Silverado – into 'The LEGO Movie 2: The Second Part,'" said Sandor Pizar, director of Chevrolet Truck marketing.

"The themes of determination and teamwork in the new movie align perfectly with our Chevy brand values and we are sure that the all-new Silverado has the features, technologies and strength that would help Emmet,

Lucy and their friends as they take on exciting new challenges."

Making the full-size pickup truck out of LEGO blocks wasn't easy, Farah said. Eighteen specially trained LEGO Master Builders spent more than 2,000 hours hand-selecting and placing each of the 334,544 pieces on the red LEGO Silverado, which has unique working lights and graphic details.



Chevy showed off a full-sized Silverado made of LEGO bricks at NAIAS.

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Hill accepts the IHS Markit's Loyalty trophy from Balasia.

General Motors' IHS Markit Loyalty Scores Are Tops

Consumer loyalty helps keep sales up and that's good news for GM, said company spokeswoman Lauren Langille.

General Motors Co. has earned the highest customer loyalty among all automakers selling in the United States for the fourth year in a row, IHS Markit confirmed at the *Automotive News* World Congress held in conjunction with the recent North American International Auto Show, Langille said.

IHS Markit, which is a leading source of global automotive industry information, analysis and insight, recognized GM's success in retaining owners over repeat buying cycles.

Steve Hill, GM's U.S. vice president of Sales, Service and Marketing, accepted the award on behalf of the company and its dealers from IHS Markit Vice President of Automotive Advisory Services Kristen Balasia.

"Such strong loyalty only comes when everyone keeps the customer at the center of everything we do, whether they are making, marketing, selling or servicing our vehicles," Hill said.

GM also announced that more than one million Chevrolet, GMC, Buick and Cadillac drivers have signed up for My GM Rewards, the automotive industry's first comprehensive loyalty rewards program, Langille said.

The program, launched in April of last year, allows customers to earn and redeem points on eligible new purchases,

including new vehicles, dealer services, accessories, and On-Star and connected services. It's also open to non-GM drivers who want to have their vehicles serviced at GM dealerships and make other purchases.

"My GM Rewards is our way of thanking loyal customers and making sure they have a great ownership experience, so they come back to Chevrolet, GMC, Buick and Cadillac dealers again and again," said Hill. "The program has been a big hit since it was launched, and its growth has exceeded our expectations because the rewards are easy to earn and redeem on things that people really want and need."

The sales and service experience delivered by Chevrolet, Cadillac, Buick and GMC dealers is a major reason why GM's loyalty scores are so consistently high, Hill says.

Buick ranked highest in satisfaction for dealer service among mass market brands for the second consecutive year in the 2018 J.D. Power Customer Service Index (CSI) Study, which measures service satisfaction among owners and lessees of 1- to 3-year-old vehicles, Langille said. Chevrolet tied for second place, followed by GMC. Cadillac ranked third in luxury brands.

GMC is the second highest-ranked brand for sales satisfaction, according to the 2018 J.D. Power Sales and Satisfaction Index (SSI) study. It measures sales experience satisfaction.

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The site of the Packard bridge collapse was cordoned off for safety because of potential chemical exposure.

Packard Plant Pedestrian Bridge Collapses

The famed Packard Plant pedestrian bridge that crossed East Grand Boulevard in Detroit collapsed.

The event took place at about 3 p.m. on Jan. 23. Detroit police reported that no one was injured when the collapse happened and the street was immediately closed off so that debris could be cleared.

Joe Kopietz, a spokesman for site co-owner Arte Express, told *The Detroit News* that contractors at the site noticed bricks falling from the bridge at about 3 p.m. He says the cause of the collapse is believed to be a pre-existing structural issue and temperature fluctuations.

The city also co-owns the bridge. The office of Mayor Mike Duggan says it's making plans to have a contractor remove the debris as soon as possible.

The bridge was erected in 1939. It had been off-limits to tour groups in recent years because of concerns about its structural integrity.

Most of the Packard Plant is owned by Spanish-born developer Fernando Palazuelo, who is

gradually moving forward with a site redevelopment plan.

Attorney Joe Kopietz, a spokesman for Palazuelo's company Arte Express Detroit, told the *Detroit Free Press* that Palazuelo hopes to see the

bridge reconstructed in the future.

He did not know the precise cause of the collapse, but suspects that recent temperature swings between thawing and freezing had a role.

Ford Profits Decline in 2018

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) – Ford Motor Co., which has struggled overseas and saw U.S. sales fall last year, reported its first quarterly net loss in two years Jan. 23.

The company said it lost \$116 million, or 3 cents a share, in the fourth quarter, compared with a \$2.52 billion profit a year earlier. It last posted a quarterly loss in the fourth quarter of 2016.

The loss included an \$877 million one-time charge to revalue global pension assets due to a late-year market slide.

Ford made \$3.68 billion for the full year, but that was only about half of what its net profit was in 2017. North America was its only profitable region.

"It's not a year that we were

happy with," Chief Financial Officer Bob Shanks told reporters. "I think the fourth quarter kind of continued in that theme."

The annual and fourth-quarter performances sent company executives scrambling to explain to Wall Street analysts why it was taking so long to restructure and roll out new products that could increase sales and profits.

CEO Jim Hackett, who replaced the ousted Mark Fields in May of 2017, acknowledged frustration with the speed of Ford's \$11 billion restructuring effort.

"It is what it takes to build an industrial model that we're talking about, to do it the right way, to not have it fall apart," he said on a conference call with analysts.

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Your New Vehicle Can Make Money for You

GM was offering more than vehicles for sale at the 2019 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS), the company was offering people the opportunity to make money through its Maven service.

GM spokeswoman Annalisa Bluhm said the company had a message for people interested in looking at new vehicles – in the three years since Maven’s launch, the demand side of the service shows that people participating can really flip the depreciation curve of new vehicle purchase.

“Let me say this more simply,” Bluhm said. “Your new car can make money for you.”

That’s possible if people sign up for the Maven app. They place their vehicles on the Maven platform and make their cars available for others to use.

“We have users who make \$800 a month from their cars,” Bluhm said. “We pay for the insurance and it offers coverage of up to \$1 million.

“The take is split 60/40 between car owner and Maven. A car sits idle three-fourths of the day. So by making one’s car available, a Maven participant can take that car from being a money loser through depreciation to a money earner.”

Bluhm said that once people understand how Maven works, getting them to sign up isn’t that tough a sell.

“There is a certain group of people who are interested in this and it’s ripe and fertile ground to reach out to them,” Bluhm said. “And we’re not just talking about Millennials. Often the people who make their vehicles available own one or two cars. Then they find that their kids have gone off to college and they find that they might have an extra vehicle on their hands. By signing up for

Maven, they have extra flexibility in making money.”

And flexibility is the key to making Maven work, Bluhm said. It’s the car owner who determines when that vehicle is available. So a two-car family where both spouses need a car to get to work Monday through Friday, might do well by making one of their vehicles available during the weekend when they can get by with one car.

Currently, Maven is operating in Detroit and Chicago, Bluhm said. GM plans on making the service available in 10 more cities by the end of the year.

Bluhm said that when GM employees were creating Maven, they always believed that the service would be popular with Millennials who lived in crowded cities such as New York.

But what surprised people at GM was that there is a real appetite for growth of the service.

“We saw growing demand right away,” Bluhm said. “We thought Maven would start relatively

small and grow over time. But within two-and-a-half months of its launch we knew that the platform would work in any urban area.”

GM is built for economies of scale, Bluhm said. There are a lot of GM car buyers out there. Those who have purchased GM products within the past five years can participate in Maven, provided their vehicles meet certain conditions.

“After people go to Maven.com and upload the app, we send someone to check out their vehicles,” Bluhm said.

“We have to make sure the vehicle in question checks out. And in addition to being in good physical condition, the vehicle must also have a certain level of connectivity.”

Signing up for Maven is that simple, Bluhm said. The program allows vehicle owners to make money from their cars.

“Once people learn that, getting them to sign up isn’t hard,” Bluhm said.



Maven experts have to OK cars before they can be used for the service.

Toyota Allies With Panasonic

TOKYO (AP) – Toyota Motor Corp. and Panasonic Corp. are setting up a joint venture to research, manufacture and sell batteries for ecological autos, an increasingly lucrative sector amid concerns about global warming.

The Japanese automaker and the Japanese electronics maker said in a joint statement Jan. 22 that Toyota will take a 51 percent stake and Panasonic 49 percent in the joint venture, which is scheduled to be up and running by the end of 2020.

The companies have been studying working together on batteries since 2017.

They did not say how much would be invested in the joint venture.

Panasonic will transfer equipment, assets and workers from its plants in Japan and China to the joint venture, which will employ 3,500 workers from both companies.

Separately, Panasonic already

has invested in a battery factory with U.S. electric car maker Tesla Inc.

Innovations in batteries are critical for electric vehicles, with charging times and costs key obstacles to the public’s acceptance and use of the new technology.

Toyota, Japan’s No. 1 automaker, is thought to have fallen behind rival Nissan Motor Co. in pioneering electric vehicles, and has been trying to catch up in recent years.

The companies said the automotive sector was trying to meet various challenges that require innovation and new ways of thinking about transportation, including autonomous driving and car-sharing services.

“Today’s automotive world is also being called on by society to help find solutions to such issues as those related to global warming, resources and energy,” they said in a joint statement.

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