

STRIKE UPDATE:

UAW Gets to Keep Health Insurance

Editor's note – the GM-UAW negotiations are an ongoing process. This is the latest information available at press time.

DETROIT (AP) – General Motors now says striking workers will get company-paid health insurance, nine days after telling the union that coverage would be cut off.

The automaker said in an emailed letter to the United Auto Workers dated Sept. 25 that employee health and well-being are GM's top priorities.

The about-face came after workers howled and GM received withering criticism from politicians and on social media about cutting off the benefits.

"These irresponsible actions by General Motors are toying with the lives of hundreds of thousands of our UAW families," UAW Vice President Terry Dittes wrote in a letter Sept. 26 to Scott Sandefur, GM's vice president of labor relations. Dittes wrote that public sentiment would "see these actions of GM as a shameful act!"

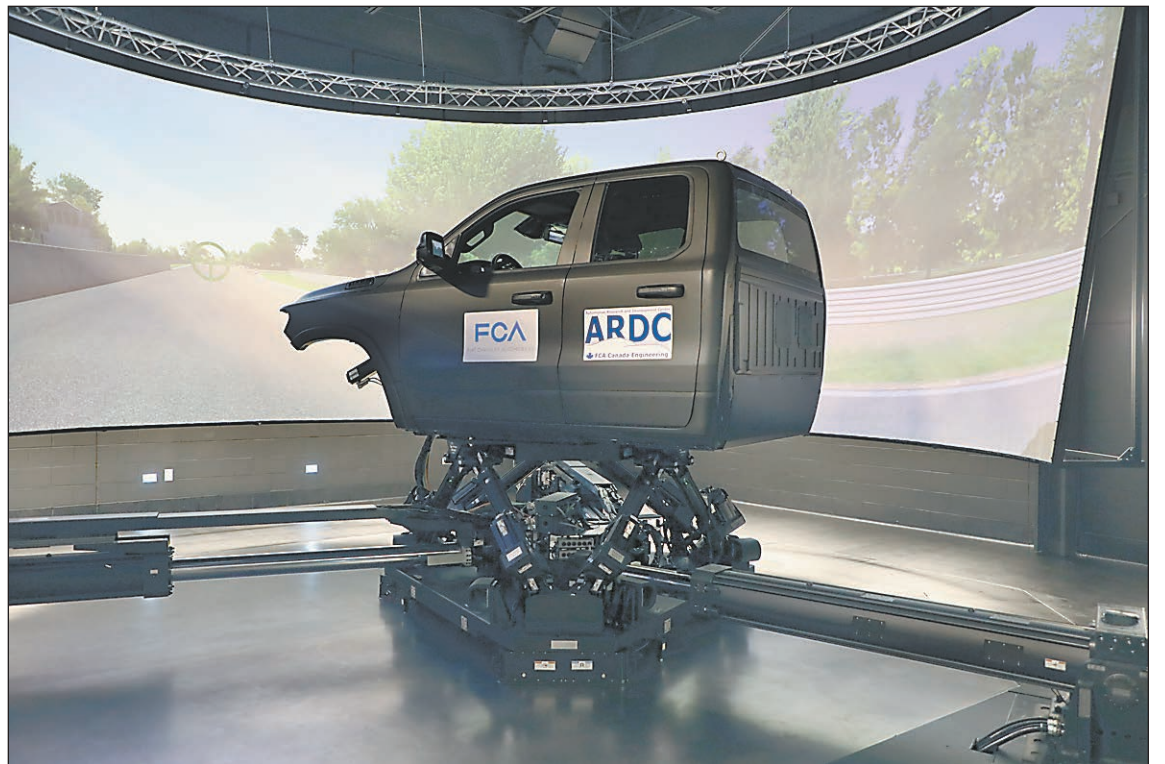
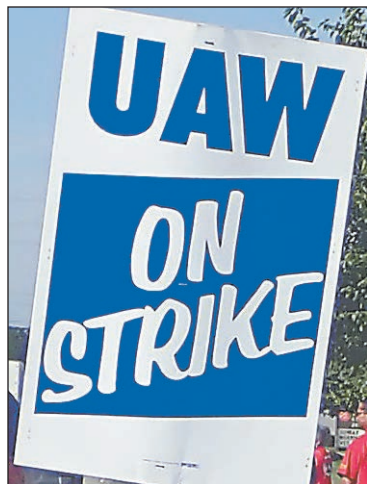
It wasn't clear how the rhetoric or the health care spat would affect contract talks aimed at ending the strike by 49,000 workers that has shut down manufacturing for nearly two weeks at

more than 30 GM plants across the nation.

"This is an attempt to do what's right for our employees," GM spokesman Dan Flores said.

It's normal procedure in strikes for the cost of health care to shift from the company, which is largely self-insured, to the union. It says on the union website that the UAW will pick up the cost of the premiums. But the timing of when GM ends the health care and when the union takes over is at issue. The UAW said the benefits lapsed, but did not give a date.

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The FCA simulator in the company's ARDC facility has nine directions of movement.

FCA Simulator Makes Testing Virtual Cinch

Testing how cars perform is one of the vital jobs of designers and engineers. Being able to test how vehicles perform using a simulator can really iron out problems before going to the physical testing phase.

And that's why FCA has acquired its latest simulator.

The FCA Automotive Research and Development Centre (ARDC) inaugurated a new Vehicle Dynamics Simulator (VDS) lab today, launching the most advanced driving simulator technology available in North America, said FCA spokesman Nick Cappa. With nine directions of

movement and specific driver calibration, the new simulator closely duplicates the actual driving experience.

"Our new VDS is cutting-edge technology that emulates a vehicle's driving dynamics in a real

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2020 NAIAS Summer Opening Lets Event Show Off the City of Detroit

by Jim Stickford

Moving the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) from January to June means more than just changing dates on a calendar – it means the event can expand outside the confines of the TCF building (formerly called the Cobo Center) to the streets of Detroit.

Doug North, owner of Westland-based dealership North Brothers Ford and head of the 2020 NAIAS, spoke to reporters at a special gathering held last week at the Detroit Athletic Club and sponsored by the Automotive Press Association.

By moving the show from the

cold of January to the warmth of June, the event will allow for OEMs and suppliers to do more, including hold events outside.

"There will be dozen of events, both indoors and outside," North said. "Things will spill out from the TCF Center. We will have two million more square feet in which to put on the show. The foundation of the show will still be the two days of reveals during the press portion of the show. But we will have more technology on display, more move AV content, more mobility content.

"We certainly expect the economic impact of the 2020 show to be greater in June with 70 degree temperatures than a show in

January with freezing cold and snow."

And having the show in June places it firmly in the middle of several events – the Detroit Grand Prix, the Rocket Mortgage Classic PGA golf tournament and the Ford Fireworks – that bring a lot of life to downtown Detroit.

After North spoke, Tim Stevens, editor at large / Roadshow, moderated a four person panel. They talked about how the 2020 auto show is reflecting and adapting to the rapid change the auto industry is currently experiencing.

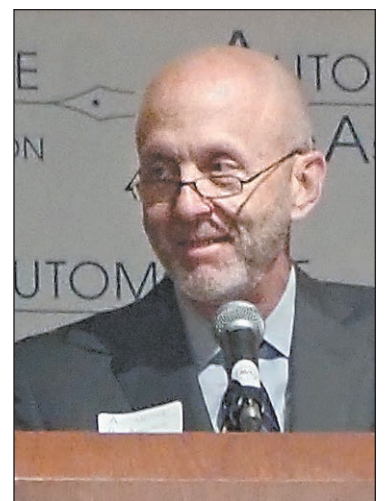
The panelists were Beth Chappell, director of Special Programs for NAIAS; Mark De La Vergne, of

the Detroit Mayor's Office; Elsie Felds, a connected vehicle specialist at MDOT; and Amanda Roraff; director of Technology for PlanetM.

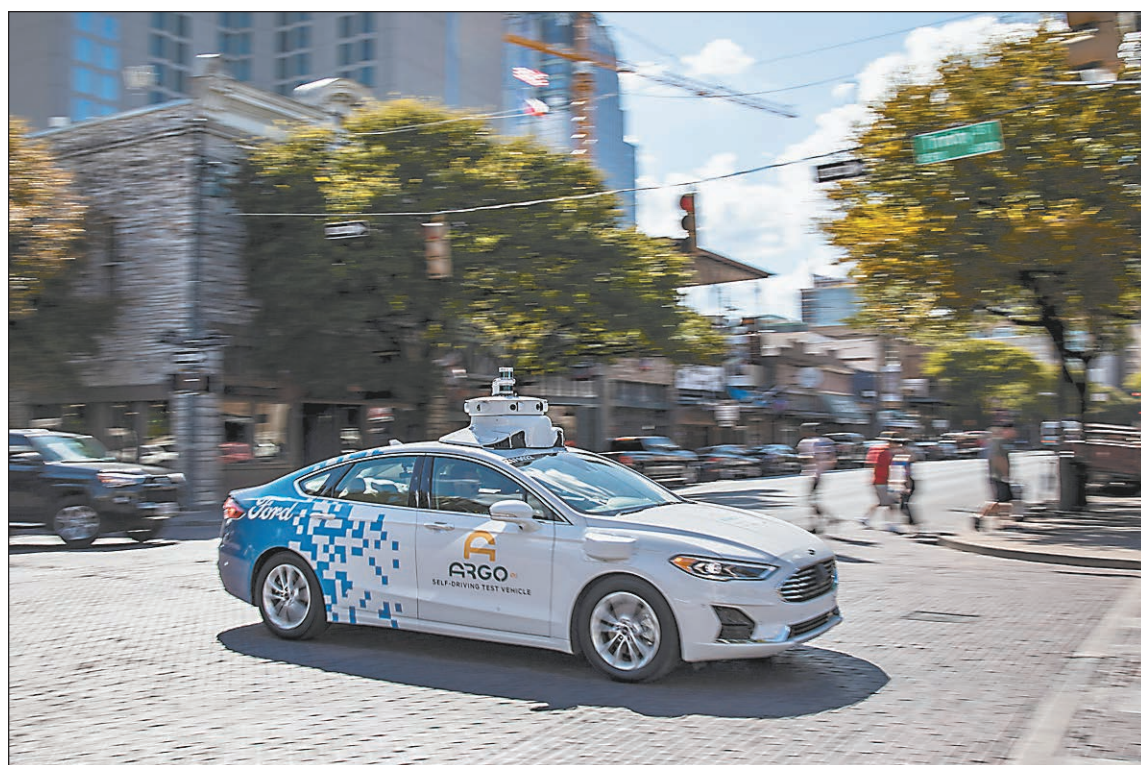
Roraff said that part of PlanetM's strategy as a full concierge service for mobility-focused startups, companies or investors, is to use the 2020 NAIAS to show off the technology that is out there and being developed to its customers. It's a chance to get everyone together in one place, and it'll be warm outside, something that doesn't hurt.

Felds said that while AV tech is being displayed at the show, it's

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Doug North



The city of Austin, Texas, is the latest environment in which Ford is using to develop autonomous driving.

Ford Expands Testing AV Tech on Urban Streets

Developing an autonomous car means testing it in real-world driving conditions.

And as the first city to allow a self-driving test vehicle on public streets, Austin is no stranger to experimentation, said Sherif Marakby, CEO, Ford Autonomous Vehicles LLC.

"And we think now is the perfect time to continue exploring how this technology can become an important part of a city's transportation infrastructure – and make people's lives easier," Marakby said. "At Ford, we're excited to announce Austin will become our third launch market for self-driving vehicles, along with Miami-Dade County and Washington, D.C. It's easy to love Austin for the live music, its emergence as a prominent tech hub and even the bats. We are

excited to bring more transportation solutions to a growing city that is beloved by visitors and community members alike."

In each of the last eight years, Austin has been the fastest growing metro region in America, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That growth has been felt by residents, as it provides new jobs as well as a diverse food and entertainment scene, but it has also affected how Austinites travel throughout the city. The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization predicts vehicle use in the Austin region could double by 2040, while highway capacity will only grow 15 percent.

"Simply put, Austin has to look towards diverse and innovative

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Having the NAIAS During Summer Opens Up Show

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important for MDOT to speak with firms about their needs and to calculate how the public can benefit from this new tech.

"We at MDOT have a lot more openness to these new concepts," Feld said. "We are all trying to figure to be better. We know we have to change the way we operate. MDOT no longer is just a department that builds roads. We have to figure out how technology will affect infrastructure and what technology to use."

De La Vergne said that said that the city of Detroit is eager to work with national and international companies on testing AVs within the city. But he also said that it's the state that sets the rules.

"We're different from MDOT," De La Vergne said. "We're just a small piece of a larger puzzle. I will say that there will be growing pains with this AV tech and we will have to work through the difficulties together."

Stevens then spoke about how the 2020 show will have 13 acres of space inside and outside TCF. He asked how the vendors would take advantage of that.

Felds said that there will different modes of transport set up around TCF. This includes shuttles that will take people to different displays outside at locations such as Martius Park.

People will have the opportunity to ride AVs and see how they work in an urban environment.

Chappell said that both large and small companies that have a presence at the show will have to take the development of AV tech and the steps needed to create it in a inviting environment seriously, especially if people want Michigan to prosper as a center of development for the technology.

"We will need to work hard to find out what is needed for Michigan to succeed," Chappell said.

"There will be centers of AV and EV expertise around the world and if we're one of them here in Michigan, shame on us. We, both business and government, will all have to grow in the same direction, and you don't see that often."

The final question of the day was how would Detroit handle the media of the world at the 2020 show.

De La Vergne said that hopefully, it wouldn't rain. But he said that the show will be taking over areas around the TCF center and it's up to the city to make sure that everyone involved in the show get the support needed for it to be a success.

EVs Require Fewer Employees to Make, Threat to UAW

by TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – If U.S. consumers ever ditch fuel burners for electric vehicles, then the United Auto Workers union is in trouble.

Gone would be thousands of jobs at engine and transmission plants across the industrial Midwest, replaced by smaller workforces at squeaky-clean mostly automated factories that mix up chemicals to make batteries.

The union is keenly aware of this possibility as it negotiates for the future as much as the present in contract talks with General Motors. Meanwhile, more than 49,000 union workers are on strike against the company and have shut down its factories for the past six days.

GM CEO Mary Barra has promised an "all-electric future," with the company going through a painful restructuring to raise cash in part to develop 20 electric models that it plans to sell worldwide by 2023.

In the contract talks, GM has offered to build an electric vehicle battery factory in Lordstown, Ohio, where the company is closing an assembly plant. The automaker, according to a person briefed on the offer, wants the plant to be run by a joint venture or a battery company. It would be staffed by far fewer union workers who would be paid less than the \$30 per hour that UAW members make on the assembly lines, said the person, who didn't want to be identified because contract details are confidential.

For the union, getting the top pay at Lordstown is crucial because battery jobs could one day supplant many of those at GM's 10 U.S. powertrain factories that now employ more than 10,500 hourly workers. Also at stake is the future of the union, which has lost high-paying auto jobs over the past 30 years, said Sam Abuelsamid, an analyst for Navigant Research who follows the auto industry.

"I can see why the UAW would reject such a deal," Abuelsamid said. "To accept a lower wage tier for employees at Lordstown or any other plant where GM wants to do something similar, I think that would be foolish for them."

For the company, however, the lower wages are needed to keep costs competitive with other automakers who will contract out battery cell and pack manufacturing to nonunion factories that pay less than the UAW wage, Abuelsamid said. GM also must reign in expenses as it tries to

Faurecia Planning New Highland Park Investment

HIGHLAND PARK, Mich. (AP) – Officials say auto parts maker Faurecia is planning to invest \$10.7 million and create 500 jobs in the Detroit enclave of Highland Park.

The planned investment was announced Sept. 24 as the Michigan Economic Development Corp. said the company is expected to get a \$2 million Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant. Plans call for workers to assemble automotive seats, seat frames, foam cushions and seat covers.

In other projects announced, Caledonia-based insurance broker Acrisure plans to invest \$33 million in Grand Rapids to expand its future world headquarters in the western Michigan city. The project will include relocating 280 employees to downtown Grand Rapids and creating 400 new jobs.

The company is getting incentives including a \$1 million grant.

sell more electric vehicles, which now are more expensive than those powered by gas, he said.

The company won't give details about how many workers would be employed at the Lordstown battery plant or how much they'll be paid. But the number won't be anywhere near the \$30 an hour top wage at the assembly plant, which two years ago employed 4,500 people making the Chevrolet Cruze compact car.

The only GM plant comparable to what's being proposed in Lordstown now sits in Brownstown Township, Michigan. About 100 UAW workers there took battery cells made by LG Chem in Western Michigan and combined them into packs for the Chevrolet Volt rechargeable gas-electric car. The Volt was canceled last spring, and now 22 remaining workers make hybrid battery packs and assemble autonomous vehicle equipment.

In 2009, the UAW agreed to a lower wage of \$15 to \$17 per hour at Brownstown to help get the Volt started.

While there is potential for growth if electric car sales take off and more batteries are needed, no one is sure when or if that will happen in the U.S. Few are predicting that Barra's "all electric future" is coming soon and the Trump administration has proposed rolling back fuel economy requirements.

Fully electric vehicles currently make up about 1.5 percent of U.S. new vehicle sales, and LMC Automotive forecasts it will rise to only 7.5 percent by 2030. The forecasting firm doesn't see EV sales hitting 50 percent of the market until at least 2049.

Globally it's a different story. Navigant sees growth from just over 1 million sales last year to 6.5 million by 2025. The surge is expected because of government

incentives and fuel economy regulations in China.

Currently, GM loses thousands on each Chevy Bolt electric car it sells, and it hasn't been able to mass produce enough of them to bring the cost down. Without large-volume production, it's tough to cut the price. Paying full union wages at Lordstown would push costs up.

"You can't be at a cost disadvantage in a market that's in its infancy," said Jeff Schuster, senior vice president for LMC.

Even if the union is successful at getting higher wages at battery plants, engine and transmission jobs will someday start to disappear, Abuelsamid said.

He estimates that it will take only 25 percent to 50 percent of the current engine and transmission workforce to build battery cells, packs and electric motors. GM and others also could keep outsourcing battery cells and packs to nonunion plants as General Motors does now for the Bolt.

Whether the union will make a stand on electric vehicles in this

round of contract talks remains to be seen. It may decide that it doesn't want to set a lower-wage precedent that could spread to Fiat Chrysler or Ford. But if it can preserve health insurance and get pay raises, job guarantees, more profit-sharing and a path for temporary workers to go full-time, it may punt the issue to future contract talks, says Schuster.

"The ultimate path (to electric vehicles), in our opinion, is so far down the road that I'm not sure it has to be dealt with right now," he said. "I don't know if it has to be the thing that holds up a deal at this stage."

Workers at the powertrain plants know their future is in the balance, said Tim O'Hara, president of the UAW local in Lordstown. He expects the union to try to protect as many higher-paying jobs as it can.

"It's been on a lot of people's minds about the electric future," O'Hara said. "The goal is always to have the same kind of jobs with benefits and wages as you start out with."



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Brimmer and Anderson talk about Ally's "Moguls in the Making" program and how it helps black students.

Ally Financial Developing Future Moguls

Ally Financial, formerly known as GMAC, believes in investing in local talent.

Just ask Sean "Big Sean" Anderson, who stated the issue at the beginning of a short documentary from Ally that recently debuted.

"Thirteen percent of the American population is black, but only one percent of VC (venture capital) backed startups have black founders. The Moguls in the Making program is out to change that," Anderson said.

The documentary captures the intensity of the Moguls in the Making program as Historically Black College and University (HBCU) students represent their schools in the business plan pitch competition in Detroit this past March, said Ally spokeswoman Cristi Vazquez. It then follows the contributions of 15 of those students as they joined Ally this summer for internships.

"The Moguls in the Making program is aimed at offering these students exposure and opportunity to build the skills needed to become a successful entrepreneur," said Andrea Brimmer, chief marketing and public relations officer, Ally. "The documentary highlights the brilliant minds of these students who came together this summer as part of the Ally team to share their visions on how to solve real issues in Detroit and at Ally."

For the Moguls in the Making program, 50 HBCU students from across the country traveled to Detroit to participate in a week-end-long competition.

They worked in groups of five to develop business solutions to various issues facing Detroit including employment, education and real estate, Brimmer said. Ally teamed up with fellow Motor

City native, entertainer and entrepreneur Sean Anderson and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf) to create this innovative program aimed at preparing students from HBCUs to become future entrepreneurs.

Anderson is the founder of the Sean Anderson Foundation, which is dedicated to improving the education, health, safety and well-being of school aged youth and their families Vazquez said.

The ten teams pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges including Anderson; Andrea Brimmer, Ally's chief marketing and public relations officer; Anand Talwar, Ally's deposit and consumer strategy executive; Tommey Walker, principal of Detroit vs. Everybody; and George Spencer, executive vice president of business development, innovation and entrepreneurship, TMCf.

Ally's CEO Jeffrey Brown was so inspired by the students that he decided to offer internships to any of the 50 participants who were available. In the end, 15 HBCU students from the Moguls in the Making program joined Ally in Detroit and Charlotte this summer with another student joining Ally in Charlotte this fall.

"You get new ideas, you get new perspectives, you get different opinions, different backgrounds," Brown said in the documentary, speaking on the Moguls interns. Brown added that it was "a great opportunity for them and a great opportunity for us."

The students worked on a variety of assignments including developing a financial education tool for middle school students and working on individual projects with their Ally colleagues.

"We believe that to truly 'Do It

Right,' the business world should reflect the diverse world around us," said Brimmer. "Ally wants to share the story of how we are taking action to inspire other business leaders to join us in tackling this important societal necessity."

Japanese Auto Agreement

TOKYO (AP) – Japanese automakers on Sept. 26 urged government officials to do more to support the key industry and their business after their government signed a trade deal with the U.S. that only kept auto tariffs unchanged.

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Donald Trump, both attending the U.N. General Assembly in New York, signed a trade agreement covering agricultural, industrial and digital trade.

Japanese auto industry has been a main U.S. target of blame, and industry officials were hoping to see auto tariffs eliminated, but Japan could only keep them at 2.5 percent and a U.S. promise of no more for now. Negotiations began last year after Trump complained about huge American trade deficit against Japan and threatened higher tariffs and other measures.

At a meeting with Japanese trade minister and top officials

hours after the signing, Toyota Motor President Akio Toyoda urged government to do more for the auto industry, citing a harsh business environment. Toyoda also heads the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association.

"The auto industry already faces extremely difficult challenges amid rising Japanese yen, possible impact from the upcoming sales tax increase and other uncertainties," a grim-faced Toyoda said in his opening remarks to the officials. "We do hope that the Japanese government understands the severe situation and provide us further support to help the auto industry to strengthen its competitiveness and grow as a strategic industry."

Trade Minister Isshu Sugawara and top ministry officials invited heads of automakers to a meeting in Tokyo, to gain their understanding. Sugawara said the deal would help assure free and fair trade between the nations.





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The 2019 Cherokee went through tough testing by IIHS to earn its grade.

Cherokee Earns IIHS Top Crash Safety Ratings

When it comes to safety, the new-for-2019 Jeep Cherokee mid-size SUV has earned a Top Safety Pick rating from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS).

The rating applies to 2019 Jeep Cherokees produced after April of this year, when equipped with Jeep's available Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) technology – Forward Collision Warning-Plus – and LED projector headlamps with optional automatic high-beam control, said FCA spokesman Eric Mayne.

These are among more than 80 available safety and security features that carry over to model-year 2020.

"This latest award is solid recognition for the Jeep Cherokee, an SUV that is not only recognized for being the most capable vehicle in its class, but also packed with more than 80 advanced safety and security features and benchmark 4x4 systems to help consumers tackle any terrain in all weather conditions," says Jim Morrison, head of Jeep Brand – FCA North America. "Jeep Cherokee provides the confidence and security to handle any journey."

High-strength-steel upgrades to the 2019 Jeep Cherokee's A-pillar and hinge-pillar are among the key engineering changes that contribute to its Top Safety Pick rating, Morrison said.

These factor into improved performance in the IIHS small-overlap

tests, which simulate certain frontal crash impacts.

The Jeep Cherokee recorded "good" results – the highest possible crashworthiness rating – in all six crashworthiness tests, three of which simulate frontal impacts. The remaining tests inflict damage consistent with a side impact, rear impact and a rollover.

Forward Collision Warning-Plus was graded "superior," the highest possible rating awarded by IIHS in front crash prevention. The optional feature boasts sensor-fusion technology, which blends camera capability with radar detection to determine when an impact is imminent.

The system initially warns the driver to take action to avoid a collision. If the driver does not act in a timely manner, the system may activate the vehicle's brakes if collision risk remains.

The Top Safety Pick rating is also enabled by the Jeep Cherokee's standard-equipment LED projector headlamps with optional automatic high-beam control. The available feature switches headlamp modes between high- and low-beam function – depending on traffic conditions – without driver intervention.

The launch of the 2019 Jeep Cherokee also marked the debut of a premium design language and the model line's introduction of a 2.0-liter direct-injected inline four-cylinder engine that enhances performance and fuel efficiency.

FCA Simulator Can Do Much More

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time, virtual environment," said Tony Mancina, head of Engineering, FCA Canada. "This new technology offers the driver a customized virtual immersion that replicates the ride and handling of a specific vehicle on a multitude of simulated road surfaces and driving environments."

Most driving simulators make use of six actuators to deliver six "degrees of freedom." However, to accurately reproduce vehicle ride, handling and acceleration characteristics, the FCA VDS system uses nine actuators to create additional ranges of motion that create a closer immersion to an actual vehicle, Mancina said.

A notable feature of the new VDS is a three-micron cushion of air, which floats the entire 4.5-ton

motion platform above the floor like a hovercraft or air-hockey puck, allowing for a quiet and seamless motion via the massive electric actuators.

The new simulator has the ability to add subsystems, such as brake and steering, Anti-lock Brake System (ABS) and Electronic Stability Control (ESC), to create a hardware in the loop test bench to better meet functional targets. This strategy helps reduce product development times and lower project validation costs.

"The ability to simulate a drive experience with hardware in the loop is key to our engineering efforts and assists in identifying design changes much earlier in the development process," said Rob Wichman, head of FCA Vehicle Engineering. "By using simu-

lators, we can create a virtual environment to assess the ride and handling of a vehicle, perform tests on sensor technology for Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) applications, evaluate different Human Machine Interface (HMI) configurations, and test for driver distraction and distraction remedies."

The simulator can be fitted with any vehicle body, road and environment. To create a visual experience on the five projector screens, data is collected by scanning the environments and the different roads, such as FCA's proving grounds located in Chelsea.

The data is then stitched together to create a real-time virtual environment that can include elevation changes, off-camber roads and potholes.

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J.D. Power: Expect Sept. Sales Drop

New-vehicle retail sales in September are expected to fall from a year ago, according to a forecast developed jointly by J.D. Power and LMC Automotive. Retail sales are projected to reach 1,007,000 units, a 15.2 percent decrease compared with September 2018. Controlling for the number of selling days, this translates to a decline of 7.8 percent from last year on two fewer selling days. This year excludes the Labor Day holiday and has one fewer weekend than September 2018, said J.D. Power spokesman Geno Effler.

New-vehicle retail sales in Q3 are projected to reach 3,622,500, flat compared to Q3 2018. In contrast, new-vehicle retail sales in the first half of the year were down 2.9 percent.

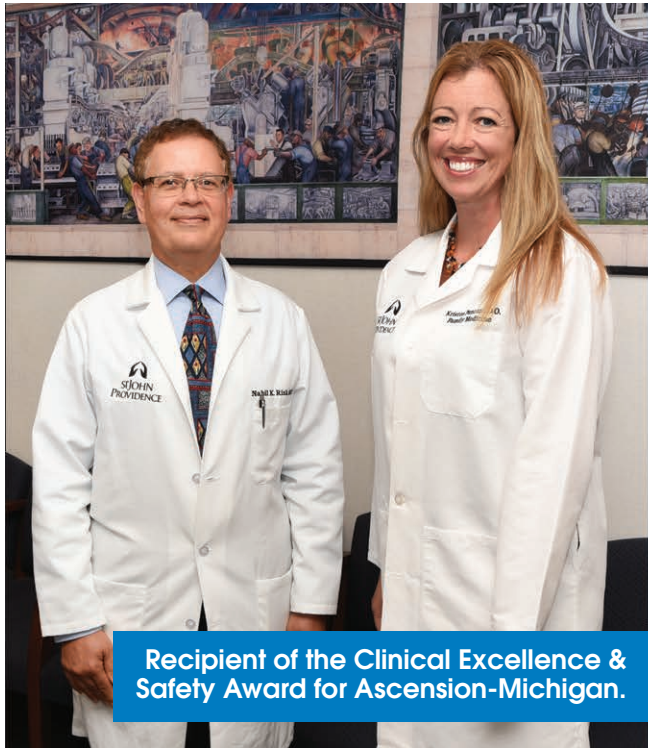
Total sales in September are projected to reach 1,244,000 units, a 13.3 percent decrease compared with September 2018. Adjusting the results for two fewer selling days results in a decline of 5.8 percent. The seasonally adjusted annualized rate (SAAR) for total sales, which normalizes sales for the exclusion of the Labor Day holiday and one fewer weekend this year, is expected to be 16.8 million units. This is down 500,000 units from a year ago.

New vehicle total sales in Q3 are projected to reach 4,280,000 units, flat compared with Q3 2018. In contrast, new-vehicle total sales in the first half of the year were down 1.5 percent.

"After delivering record sales

results in August, when retail sales rose 6.2 percent on a selling-day adjusted basis, the decline in September sales was expected and reflects a quirk in how the industry reports sales," said Thomas King, Senior Vice President of the Data and Analytics Division at J.D. Power.

The large decline in sales this month is driven primarily by the timing of the Labor Day holiday. Unlike most years, sales from the Labor Day holiday weekend were included in August sales reporting instead of September.



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Women of Ford Donate Time to ‘Global Day of Service’

Ford Motor Company’s Legal Alliance for Women is spearheaded another Global Day of Service this month to assist nonprofit organizations worldwide in supporting the empowerment of women and girls. Employees from more than 70 law firms will join Ford volunteers working at homeless shelters and food banks, and performing pro bono legal work to help make people’s lives better.

The vision of this Global Day of Service on Sept. 24 is to help community organizations that are supporting educational opportunities, addressing health and legal issues and advancing programs that benefit women and girls, said Ford spokeswoman Stafanie Dunham.

This effort, bringing together volunteers from 30 states throughout the United States and eight additional countries – including Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, Spain, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Venezuela – aims to make a positive impact in the communities where Ford and its partners conduct business.

“Community service with a resolute focus on positively impacting the lives of women and girls is particularly important because of the exponential impact strong and thriving women have on our communities,” said Bradley Gayton, general counsel, Ford Motor Company. “It is not only gratifying to serve, it is an important part of the Ford Fund’s mission to build stronger communities.”

Ford’s Legal Alliance for Women and partner law firms in southeast Michigan also participated in the Project Clean Slate Expungement Fair in Detroit on Sept. 28. They worked with eligible city residents to get their criminal records erased so they

can pursue better employment opportunities, Dunham said.

“The passion we share in advocating for and serving our communities extends beyond this one day,” said Beth Rose, chief compliance officer, Ford Motor Company, and chairperson of Ford’s Legal Alliance for Women. “This is part of who we are as individuals and drives our community service year-round.”

This Global Day of Service is part of Ford Global Caring Month, the signature annual event of Ford Volunteer Corps. Throughout September, thousands of Ford employees team up to perform community service work in 34 countries, Dunham said.

Ford volunteers feed the hungry, install clean water systems, renovate schools and shelters, build homes, and mentor young men and women to help make people’s lives better.

“Ford volunteers play a vital role in demonstrating Ford’s commitment to become the world’s most trusted company,” said Todd Nissen, director, Ford Volunteer Corps. “We appreciate

all they do to make the world a better place for everyone.”

The Ford Volunteer Corps is the heart of a global network that enlists thousands of employees annually. Ford Global Caring Month is the largest concentration of Ford employees performing service work in communities globally, but Ford volunteers are engaged

year-round at food banks, care facilities and schools.

Since its launch in 2005 by Executive Chairman Bill Ford, Ford Volunteer Corps has contributed 1.7 million hours of community service in 50 countries, representing nearly \$45 million of in-kind community investments, Dunham said.



Lani Duffy checking paperwork at the 2018 Expungement Fair.

General Motors-UAW Strike Talks Continue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sandefur wrote in his letter that GM has chosen to work with health providers to keep benefits fully in place for workers “so they have no disruption to their medical care, including vision, prescription and dental coverage.”

Another GM plant, this time in Mexico, has been forced to close due to parts shortages caused by the strike, the company confirmed Thursday. An engine factory in Silao, Mexico, which employs 500 people, has closed, the company said, but pickup

truck assembly and transmission plants at the same site remain open. Workers can take vacation time or they’ll get an unspecified portion of their pay, GM said. One plant and part of another have been closed in Canada.

Contract talks continued into the evening of Sept. 26, a day after Dittes wrote a letter to members saying that committees had finished their work and the talks had moved to the main table of top bargainers, a sign of progress.

Experts say the top bargainers would have to decide con-

tentious economic issues such as wages, profit sharing, giving temporary workers a path to full-time jobs, products for plants General Motors wants to close and other issues that could take a lot of time.

On Detroit-area picket lines Sept. 26, workers said GM’s restoration of health care benefits makes them think that a contract agreement is near.

“That tells you we’re getting closer,” said worker Lee Harris, as he walked the picket line at an engine and transmission plant in the Detroit suburb of Romulus.

Ford Picks Another City For AV Vehicle Testing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ways to move people around,” Marakby said. “At Ford, we think self-driving vehicles have an important role to play in the future of our cities. As we continue to move towards the commercial launch of our self-driving vehicle services, we are expanding our testing operations in Austin in collaboration with Argo AI. This includes working closely with city and state officials and community partners to help ensure we are properly integrating our plans into the wider transportation system.”

Ford and Austin officials believe self-driving vehicles can be part of a comprehensive mobility solution by providing wider access to transportation and more efficient goods delivery.

For its part, Texas has signaled ambitious plans for self-driving technology, passing a bill governing autonomous technology in the state while creating a Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Task Force to further study self-driving vehicles. Austin continues to be a huge proponent of innovation, becoming the first city in the world to host a driverless vehicle on public streets and forming a Smart Mobility Office that’s focused on quickly piloting new tech.

“This commitment is part of what makes Austin such a great place to launch a self-driving vehicle business, but it’s just the start,” Marakby said. “We believe that if you want to successfully launch a self-driving service that improves people’s lives, you can’t just drop into a city and start rolling cars out onto the streets. You need to develop a comprehensive understanding of

what people and local businesses would find useful – and that’s exactly what we’ll be doing over the next few years.

“As we start mapping roads and testing our self-driving system in Austin, we will also conduct business pilots to see how we can best deploy our vehicles. With a large university campus at its core and a vibrant, growing downtown – not to mention a dense population that’s open to ride-hailing – there is an opportunity for self-driving vehicles to perform a wide number of services. As part of our work in the community, we want to engage businesses and community groups about how this new technology can be deployed to help enhance their day-to-day lives.”

Almost 75 percent of Austinites commute by driving alone in personal vehicles, said Austin Mayor Steve Adler.

“This is simply unsustainable. Our 20-year goal is for at least 50 percent of people to take advantage of other transportation options, like buses or bicycles,” Adler said. “With our region’s population on track to double in the next 20 to 25 years, it’s clear we need to re-think how our right-of-way is used if we want people to be able to move around our city.”

More specifically, Austin sees great potential in two key areas, Adler said. The first is accessibility. In the future, self-driving vehicles have the potential to increase transportation choices for community members who previously had limited options.

Second is safety. According to national findings, 94 percent of crashes now are related to human error. AVs have the potential to drastically lower that statistic.

Feds Expanding FCA Diesel Investigation

DETROIT (AP) – Federal prosecutors on Sept. 24 expanded a criminal investigation of the auto industry by charging a FCA engineer with rigging pollution tests on more than 100,000 diesel pickup trucks and SUVs sold in the U.S., the first indictment since a wave of similar cases against VW and its managers.

The alleged scheme involving Emanuele Palma isn’t as large as the Volkswagen emissions scandal, which involved nearly 600,000 vehicles. But the charges show that investigators are still on the case, months after Fiat Chrysler agreed to a \$650 million civil settlement and said it would fix Jeep Grand Cherokees and Ram 1500 trucks with “EcoDiesel” engines made between 2014 and 2016.

Palma is charged with conspiracy, violations of the federal Clean Air Act, wire fraud and making false statements.

Prosecutors allege that he manipulated software to make the pollution control system perform differently under government testing than during regular driving. An expert said the mention of co-conspirators in Palma’s indictment suggests more people could be charged.

“As a result of his engineering decisions, his management, his lies, these vehicles on the road emitted dramatically higher pollutants than were allowed by law,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy Wyse told a judge in U.S. District Court in Detroit.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Stafford rejected Wyse’s request that Palma, a native of Italy who still works at Fiat Chrysler, wear an electronic monitoring device while he’s free on bond.



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Germany Slams VW's Bosses

by GEIR MOULSON and DAVID McHUGH
Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) – German prosecutors said Sept. 24 they have charged Volkswagen CEO Herbert Diess, Chairman Hans Dieter Poetsch and former CEO Martin Winterkorn with market manipulation in connection with the diesel emissions scandal that erupted in 2015.

The three men are accused of deliberately informing markets too late about the costs to the company that would result from the scandal, prosecutors in the city of Braunschweig said.

That, they said in a statement, meant the executives had improperly influenced the company's share price.

Winterkorn resigned shortly after the scandal became public. Poetsch was chief financial officer at the time and became chairman of the supervisory board in late 2015. Diess arrived at the company shortly before the scandal broke and was initially the head of its core Volkswagen brand.

Winterkorn was succeeded as CEO by Matthias Mueller, who was then replaced by Diess in April 2018.

Volkswagen could not immediately be reached for comment. Its shares dropped 2.4 percent on the news.

The charges raise the prospect that Diess would have to spend significant time on his defense at a point while the company is facing a challenging transition toward producing more electric autos and providing services such as carsharing through smartphone apps.

It is not unprecedented for a German CEO to continue while fending off charges. Deutsche Bank CEO Josef Ackermann was

required to spend two days a week defending himself against charges of breach of trust in connection with his duties as a board member of mobile phone concern Mannesmann. Ackermann, who is no longer CEO, was found not guilty in 2004.

Volkswagen admitted installing software in its diesel cars that turned on pollution controls when vehicles were being tested and switched them off during everyday driving. That made it look as if the cars met tough U.S. limits on harmful pollutants known as nitrogen oxides.

In all, some 11 million cars worldwide were equipped with the illegal software.

The diesel scandal has cost Volkswagen more than 30 billion euros (\$33 billion) in fines, recall costs and civil settlements.

The automaker apologized and pleaded guilty to criminal charges in the United States, where two executives were sentenced to prison and six others charged, although they could not be extradited.

\$5M Gift Helps Ann Arbor School System

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) – A \$5 million donation to the University of Michigan aims to create educational and professional opportunities for disadvantaged Detroit-area youth and young adults.

The Ann Arbor school announced Sept. 24 that half of the gift from Joan and Sanford Weill's Family Foundation will create the Youth Fund. That's intended to support collaborations with NAF, a national nonprofit with 20 career-themed academies in Detroit.

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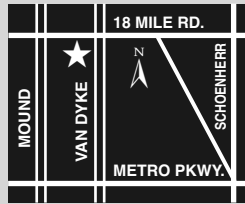


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