



BULLETIN #52/2020 APRIL 27, 2020

_CORONAVIRUS UPDATE #38

**MSADA REQUESTS GOV. BAKER TO OPEN DEALERSHIP SHOWROOMS
AFTER MAY 4 WITH APPROPRIATE OPERATIONAL PARAMETERS**

**NO WORD YET FROM GOV. BAKER ON RE-OPENING ECONOMY AFTER
MAY 4**

**ALBIN, RANDALL & BENNETT WEBINAR ON PPP LOANS – FRIDAY, MAY 1,
10 AM**

NADA DEALERSHIP LIFELINE WEBINARS SCHEDULE

[This bulletin supplements our previous bulletins #11 and #16 through #51 on this subject matter. These bulletins are intended to be cumulative so we can avoid repeating the same information.]

MSADA Request to Gov. Baker to Open Showrooms after May 4

Gov. Charlie Baker's current Coronavirus-induced closure order is set to expire on May 4. As you may recall, the first version of his closure order was issued on March 23 and set to run to April 7; on March 31, he pushed that date out to May 4. Last week, he cancelled schools for the remainder of the academic year. As of today, the governor is studying the health data to determine a post-May 4 plan of action. (See accompanying story, below.)

As Gov. Baker works towards a decision regarding the May 4 closure date, your Association last week sent the following letter to him, requesting showrooms to be opened as an essential service while complying with operational parameters to ensure a clean and safe environment for employees and customers. Dealers are already engaged in safe practices as they relate to service and parts operations, as well as the completion of on-line initiated sales.

April 23, 2020

The Honorable Charles Baker
Office of the Governor
State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Inclusion of "Motor Vehicle Sales" as Essential Services

Dear Governor Baker,

On behalf of our members and their dedicated employees, we wish to express our appreciation for your leadership and the efforts of the Baker-Polito Administration in



appreciation for your leadership and the efforts of the Baker-Polito Administration in addressing the Coronavirus (COVID-19) health crisis and the ensuing economic disruption as we all in the Commonwealth implement appropriate mechanisms to defeat this emergency. While our federal and state public agencies address the health crisis, the private sector economy has experienced an unprecedented near-collapse as a result of people limiting outside activities, either out of precaution or due to restrictions placed on businesses and public gathering spaces by federal, state, and local governments in an effort to contain the virus and limit the strain on our public health system. As our businesses and their employees attempt to survive the pandemic, we commend your efforts at this difficult time.

MSADA respectfully submits the following comments to you in an effort to keep a necessary segment of our economy working to ensure stability within a shaken economy. Our Association represents the interests of 425 franchised new-car and truck dealers in Massachusetts. Our member dealers employ over 25,000 men and women in their franchise stores. More importantly, retail activity at our member dealerships represents almost 20% of the retail activity in Massachusetts. The retail transportation economy is a key component to ensuring that those working in our communities can provide the services needed to combat this health crisis together – whether it is servicing vehicles owned and used by health care providers and first responders, or making sure a company can replace a delivery vehicle that has broken down, or getting replacement parts to a trucking company so they can continue to move groceries and medicines to stores across the Commonwealth and New England.

In the face of these challenges confronting our citizens on any number of levels, our members want you and consumers to know that our dealerships are clean, safe, open for business to the limited degree allowed under your March 31 closure order, and ready to serve whatever is needed in our collective battle against Coronavirus. Since your closure orders, the latest of which expires on May 4, our dealerships have conducted repair services as an essential business. However, dealerships have conducted sales on a limited basis to serve our customers' needs with shuttered showrooms as a result of being deemed non-essential. This restriction has greatly hindered our dealers' abilities to meet those customer needs. The vehicle purchase process is a very personnel process and not easily translated to solely an online procedure. We have provided guidance to our dealers on how to confront that challenge in as safe a manner as possible with closed showrooms.

Moving forward, as your administration and you contemplate a process for re-opening the economy after May 4, we would respectfully request that the Commonwealth follow the federal guidance that the Department of Homeland Security re-issued on April 17, in which it declared motor vehicle sales an essential service, having already included repair and service as an essential service in prior guidance (as did your administration). Specifically, the new DHS guidance includes as essential workforce personnel: *“Workers critical to the manufacturing, distribution, sales, rental, leasing, repair, and maintenance of vehicles and other transportation equipment (including electric vehicle charging stations) and the supply chains that enable these operations to facilitate continuity of travel-related operations of essential workers.”*

We feel that our dealership showrooms certainly are safer to work in to address



consumer needs with open showrooms, albeit with the limited foot traffic as suggested below, when compared to the large numbers of individuals visiting grocery and liquor stores, as well as other retail operations that have remained open and experience larger crowds of consumers. Further, with open showrooms, we can commit to conducting business by following a number of required parameters to ensure the health and safety of our employees and customers, such as:

- Maintain strict social distancing practices to facilitate a minimum six feet of separation between workers and customers and adopt policies and practices that ensure minimum contact between the public and the employees, including limiting capacity to a percentage of that allowed by building code such as 40%-50%.
- Follow all COVID-19 risk mitigation policies and any precautionary measures and guidance that shall be promulgated by the Commonwealth.
- Adopt COVID-19 risk mitigation policies, including whenever possible adopting contactless payment systems and following CDC sanitation recommendations, including disinfecting surfaces routinely and at frequent intervals; and prohibiting any and all self-serve food and beverage. (Contactless payment systems are credit cards and debit cards, key fobs, smart cards, or other devices, including smartphones and other mobile devices, that use radio-frequency identification (RFID) or near field communications (NFC) such as Samsung Pay, Apple Pay, Google Pay, Fitbit Pay, or any bank mobile application that supports contactless payment systems as opposed to the direct handling and transfer of cash or checks between the dealer and customer.)
- All parts, service, sales, online sales, and vehicle delivery services must continue to be performed in accordance with COVID-19 risk mitigation measures that reduce the risk of community disease spread.
- Handling all paperwork presented to, and received from the customer, with latex gloves. Following the exchange of documents, it is recommended that employees dispose of the gloves in proper refuse containers and employees wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Prior to signing any documents, provide pens to the customer in sealed plastic baggies and direct the customer to retain the pen so as to minimize the risk of cross contamination.
- Permitting customers to perform test drives alone without dealership personnel because of the inability to perform proper six-foot social distancing standards as recommended by the CDC.
- Wiping down all surfaces of a vehicle in which the customer or dealership personnel have touched, regardless if a person's hands were gloved and protected.
- Throughout the day, frequently cleaning and disinfecting all employee and public areas of the store.
- Make numerous containers of hand sanitizer available for staff and public use.
- Following the close of each business day, thoroughly clean and sanitize the dealership in accordance with CDC's Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations.

Accordingly, as you consider further statewide initiatives to balance the re-opening of our economy with a vigilant eye on beating back the Coronavirus spread, including potential Executive Orders, we hereby respectfully request that you ensure that the Commonwealth's motor vehicle fleet remains as safe and operational as possible by



ensuring that dealership sales operations are deemed “essential businesses” as you have previously done for service and parts operations, and such services are conducted in as safe a manner as possible under state and federal directives.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We have been in this fight together, and we stand ready to assist in any manner possible. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Chris Connolly
Herb Connolly Motor Group President
MSADA President

Robert O’Koniewski
MSADA Executive Vice President

Gov. Baker: COVID-19 Numbers May Be Hitting Plateau

[Courtesy of *State House News Service*]

APRIL 27, 2020.....At the start of an eighth week living under a state of emergency, Gov. Charlie Baker said Monday the data might be starting to show that the coronavirus's spread has "plateaued" as he committed an additional \$130 million to support efforts to fight COVID-19 in nursing homes, where the toll of the pandemic has been particularly harsh.

Baker, however, again said he would have more to say later this week about his thinking on how and when to begin reopening parts of the economy, and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh said in no uncertain terms that May 4 is too early for businesses to invite workers and customers back through their doors.

"I can tell you right now that Boston will not reopen on May 4," Walsh said.

The press briefings from Baker and Walsh came a week before the governor's executive order to close all non-essential businesses during the public health emergency is scheduled to expire on May 4.

Baker described Massachusetts as "still in the surge and very much in the fight." He contrasted the situation in the Northeast with conditions in some other states, particularly across the South, where governors have started to relax stay-at-home advisories.

"The trend data remains reasonably high," Baker said. "But obviously whatever decision we make needs to come with a little thought and a plan behind it, so we'll probably put that out later this week."

Some business groups, including the Mass High Tech Council, have published recommendations for how to reopen that rely on significantly increased testing efforts, which Baker said he supports and is working to implement. Other groups, however, say businesses must be given the chance to show they can protect workers.

"The Federal and State governments have done an admirable job communicating to the public the measures necessary for safe interactions moving forward. Small businesses



must be given the opportunity to demonstrate they are willing and capable of re-opening in a responsible and safe manner. That is the only way our state will begin to climb out of the economic disaster it currently finds itself in," said Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance spokesman Paul Craney.

The governor did say he believed Massachusetts had been successful in "flattening the curve," and noted that the number of new hospitalizations on Sunday increased by only 32 from the day before.

"It seems to have plateaued, depending upon which part of Massachusetts you're in, and then the hope and the expectation is it will start to fall, but it will probably fall slowly the same way it ramped up slowly," Baker said.

Baker said long-term care facilities, including the state's 386 nursing homes, have "unfortunately evolved into a national hotspot," with 10,031 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and more than half of the state's deaths from the disease occurring among residents and staff of the facilities.

The administration said that by the end of the week it would make \$130 million in additional funding available for nursing homes to pay for staff, cleaning and personal protective equipment.

"The numbers are tough to comprehend, but they illustrate the lethal grip COVID-19 can have on seniors, and especially those with underlying health conditions, here in the commonwealth and obviously our deepest condolences go out to the families, loved ones and staff who have been impacted by this horrible virus," Baker said.

The governor also said the state was assembling a team of 120 nurses and certified nursing assistants to deploy in teams of 10 to facilities in emergency situations, and would be auditing long-term care facilities for compliance with a new set of care criteria, including mandatory testing of staff and residents, a 28-point infection control check-list and adherence to protective equipment requirements.

The money - which comes on top of the \$130 million made available April 15 -- will be sent to facilities that can show they're living up to those safety standards.

"These funds will be allocated to nursing homes that are meeting a benchmark for certain criteria to ensure these privately operated facilities are working as safely as possible," Baker said at an afternoon press conference from the State House.

Baker said that fighting the "invisible enemy" can be especially challenging in settings like nursing homes where the coronavirus can spread undetected among residents and staff showing no symptoms.

"That makes controlling the disease much harder, and it also demands a new level of infection control and staffing requirements for our nursing homes so that they can create the safest environment possible," Baker said. "This, of course, is not easy to do, but it's expected, required and necessary."



Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders said the state would also make \$44 million in additional funding available for residential congregate care service providers "to address unplanned, and thus unbudgeted" expenses such as overtime, infection control, cleaning services and personal protective equipment.

The money is in addition to \$94 million made available for residential service providers in late March, and Massachusetts hopes to be reimbursed for 75 percent of the staffing costs by the federal government.

Sudders said state agencies work with 238 different residential service providers to help care for 20,500 individuals, including children and those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the state plans to increase its monthly reimbursement to those providers in May and June by an additional 15 percent.

Tim Foley, the executive vice president of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers who was personally thanked by Baker for his help during the press conference, said the increases in funding will lead to "enhanced pay" for caregivers and increased oversight to ensure a safe working environment.

"These actions support nursing home workers who are on the frontlines, brushing aside fear every day, in their fight to stop the spread of the virus and provide care for seniors and people with disabilities," Foley said in a statement.

SEIU Local 509 President Peter MacKinnon said the rate increases for residential service providers indicate recognition that those care providers are underpaid, despite putting themselves in harm's way.

"Today's rate increases are an important reminder of the vital services front line workers provide to serve our community members most in need. There is power in a union, and this announcement shows the strength of all workers in raising their voices, making their needs known, and fighting for what's right," MacKinnon said.

PPP Loans Webinar – Friday, May 1, 10:00 a.m. ET

The U.S. Small Business Administration opened up a second round of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan applications today as a result of President Trump signing a re-authorization into law on Friday. To assist dealers who have been approved for a PPP loan, MSADA associate member Albin, Randall & Bennett will conduct a webinar on Friday, May 1, at 10:00 a.m. ET, entitled, "You Have Your PPP Loan...Now What? An In-Depth Discussion about Loan Forgiveness". Click [here](#) to register.

NADA Dealership Lifeline Webinar Series Continues This Week

Tuesday, April 28, 1pm-2pm ET: [Proven Fixed Ops Strategies During COVID-19](#)
Presented by: Larry Hourcle, NADA Academy Instructor, and Erica Sietsma, COO, Digital Air Strike

Join Larry and Erica as they discuss everything from Google My Business listings and paid advertising to service schedulers, video, and texting strategies that will give a much



needed boost to your Fixed Operations and keep your service bays full. [REGISTER.](#)

Wednesday, April 29, 1pm-2pm ET: [Reducing Annual Health Insurance Costs By Up-To 7 Figures Within 90 Days](#)

Presented by: Russ Carpel, CEO, LevelFunded Health

Join Russ, an expert in dramatically reducing health insurance expenses for auto dealers nationwide, while simultaneously improving employee's medical benefits. [REGISTER.](#)

Friday, May 1, 1pm-2pm ET: [The Best Ideas from NADA 20 Groups, Part 3: In Times of COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Presented by: Tom Carney, NADA 20 Group Dealership Management Consultant

Join NADA 20 Group Dealership Management Consultant, Tom Carney, as he reviews some of the new best ideas from the NADA 20 Groups during these unprecedented times. [REGISTER.](#)