

U.S. auto workers halt strike expansion after concessions on EV battery plant

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Detroit, October 6 (RHC)-- The United Auto Workers (UAW) union has said that it will not further expand its strike after winning a major breakthrough, bringing electric vehicle battery plants into the union's national contract.

In a video appearance on Friday, UAW President Shawn Fain said that the decision would change the future of the union and the auto industry, and that further strike expansions would be momentarily paused.

“Our strike is working, but we’re not there yet,” said Fain.

The agreement would virtually guarantee that workers at the EV battery plant will be brought into the union fold, a concession that could prompt rivals to take similar steps, with strong implications for the form of labour arrangements undergirding the US transition away from fossil fuels.

“This defines the transition to EVs,” Harley Shaiken, labour professor at the University of California, Berkeley, told the Reuters news agency. “Clearly, GM’s concession on the master agreement will positively be matched by Ford and Stellantis.”

In a post on social media, David Dayen, editor of The American Prospect, an outlet that has closely followed the strike and labour developments within the industry, called the decision an “enormous win for workers in the EV transition”.

The fate of the battery plants was seen as a substantial obstacle to a final agreement between the UAW and the “Detroit Three” automakers of Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis, the subjects of a nationwide strike that began in mid-September.

“GM has agreed to lay the foundation for a just transition,” Fain said, adding the company had “leapfrogged” the pack in negotiations with the UAW. Fain added that progress had been made with Stellantis but that there were “gaps that still need to be closed”.

Fain said that the change in position from GM, which had previously pushed back against demands to extend agreements to EV plants, came after the union threatened to expand the strike to a plant that makes highly profitable SUVs in Arlington, Virginia.

The union leader said that the strike could still be expanded to such lucrative plants if progress in talks stalls out. “We know their pain points. We know their moneymakers and we know the plants they really don’t want struck,” Fain said. “And they know we’ve got more cards left to play.”

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