

# Tesla Store Grand Opening at Mohegan Sun

Photo above – Mohegan Sun President Jeff Hamilton cuts the ribbon in front of the Tesla store

## Tesla Store Opens on Tribal Land

It has been a long time coming. Finally, Connecticut consumers have a place to go to buy a Tesla and, importantly, take delivery without leaving the state. The new Tesla store at Mohegan Sun is open for business and delivered its first vehicles today. This will help alleviate the crush many of us have experienced at the Mt. Kisco, NY delivery center that we have been forced to go to in order to get our vehicles. It also simplifies the registration process – no more temporary plates.

All deliveries for CT will be at Mohegan Sun. It is a longer distance for residents of the western portion of CT than MK.

The center will have a sales staff and offer test drives, aside from making deliveries.

Federally recognized tribes have sovereignty and the state franchise laws do not apply. These laws have thus far prevented Tesla and other EV manufacturers (Rivian, Lucid, and Fisker with more on the horizon) using the direct sales model from opening stores in CT. The tribe makes its own laws.

The Tesla store will be open 7 days a week.

Tesla has a service and leasing center in Milford, CT. Consumers are able to take test drives there as well.

## **Who Didn't Show? Elected officials.**

Several elected officials, including the governor, were invited to the ribbon cutting. None came. Like Tesla opening a CT store, this is another historic first. Since when do pols not show up for a ribbon cutting? (Governor Lamont did issue a statement that called the center good news for consumers.) This illustrates how divisive the direct sales issue is – in Hartford. Among consumers, the issue polls 80 – 90% favorable.

## **75 Destination Chargers, Going to 100+**

Mohegan Sun reports that sustainability initiatives are a major part of its commitment to economic growth, tourism and community support. Jeff Hamilton, GM of Mohegan Sun, who described sustainability as part of the tribal cultural heritage, announced that its collaboration with Tesla includes the installation of Tesla destination chargers, which will be in all 3 parking garages and number 75 in total when the installation is complete in the late summer of 2024. Future plans call for an expansion to over 100.

## **A Big Day But Only A First Step**



Lori Brown of CTLCV



Zach Kahn of Tesla

Lori Brown, the Executive Director of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, noted that today's event is a win for the environment but that given the climate crisis, we cannot act fast enough. Speaking of direct sales, she noted that "we need to adopt and harmonize laws to get there."

Zach Kahn, Tesla Senior Policy Manager, East Region, noted the importance of how this facility contributes to sustainable development in eastern Connecticut. He also noted that the state is not nearly on pace to meet its stated goal for EV adoption. (The EV Club agrees with him on this point. The state's target is for 500,000 registered EVs by 2030 and we only have 36,269 now.)

Tesla and Mohegan Sun also noted their tribal workforce development initiative with Tesla jobs in the offing, an important, if sometimes overlooked, benefit.



EV Club in front of the new Tesla Store. From left to right – Paul Braren, Will Cross, Phil Levieff, Bruce Becker, Barry Kresch, Demetrios Spantidos, and Lori Brown of CTLCV

It was a good day! The EV Club was glad to be a part of it.

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## **Tesla to Open Store in CT**

### **Tesla Store to Open on Tribal Land in CT**

Tesla, frustrated for years by the legislature in its attempts to obtain permission to open stores in Connecticut, is now opening an outlet where the state rules don't apply: the

Mohegan Tribal land. Tribal land exists outside state jurisdiction and is subject only to federal law.

This tactic has been previously used by Tesla in New Mexico, where it has opened 2 outlets on tribal land, and in New York, where it has announced an agreement to build on Oneida Nation land about 20 miles east of Syracuse. New York has a limited number of Tesla stores, but this came about via a negotiation with the dealerships. The franchise laws there are still in place. This limited exception arrangement applies only to Tesla (i.e. not Rivian or Lucid) and caps the store count. Tesla has been chafing at this limit for a long time. Every Tesla store or gallery in NY is in New York City, Westchester County, or Long Island. The entire upstate region has been unserved.

The new Tesla facility, to be located at a former Victoria's Secret outlet at the Mohegan Sun Casino, will sell and deliver vehicles. Test drives will be available. Renovation of the space is set to commence imminently and should be finished at some point this fall. Deliveries will begin before the facility is completed, and we will publish an update when that information is finalized. It is not a service-center.

Mohegan Sun is located about 44 miles from Hartford, 54 miles from New Haven, and 93 miles from Stamford. Stamford is the heart of Fairfield County, which is Tesla Central. And that is the limitation of opening on tribal land – it is not near the big population centers. Nonetheless, it will make a material difference for residents of the eastern part of the state. It is our expectation that Mount Kisco will remain a delivery option for customers in western CT. We are also waiting to hear the word on whether deliveries to CT customers will be enabled at the forthcoming Chicopee, MA location (10 miles over the state line off I-91. It will be a while before that large facility is built.)

A sales and delivery facility on tribal land does not mean

that the company will stop its efforts to win the right to open stores in CT (a.k.a. direct sales). This could be viewed as planting a flag by Tesla, as the legislature has not acted in the interests of its constituents, over 80% of whom support allowing direct sales. On the other hand, the facility will open and the dealers will see that the world isn't coming to an end. (A lengthier discussion of direct sales, following the Transportation Committee's failure to raise the direct sales bill in the 2023 legislative session, can be found [here](#).)

The obvious follow-on question is whether Rivian and Lucid will do the same thing. A lot of people come to these tribal casinos. It is good business for both parties.

According to the Mohegan Sun press release, Tesla will work with Mohegan to incorporate Tribal members and Mohegan Sun Team Members into its workforce development program.

We look forward to a future post about the new sales center when they have the grand opening in the fall.

Photo credit: Paul Braren