

# Transportation Case Study

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## How Eagle County cut fleet costs and fuel consumption

Report by Mike Ogburn | Vehicle Efficiency Program | Garfield NECI

### Information gathering is essential for efficiency gains

Eagle County's first step to fleet efficiency was to conduct a utilization study. The study, conducted in 2006 by Eagle County Fleet Manager Gusty Kanakis and his team, used spreadsheets and existing fleet management software to run a month-by-month report on miles driven, fuel expenses, routine maintenance and repairs.

Owners of small fleets can manage this information with careful spreadsheet-based record keeping. Fleet software can make the job easier.

Fleet management programs can track billing, schedule preventative maintenance, account for the mechanic's time, issue work orders, electronically import fuel and cost data, and more. Using an automated program to manage service, repairs and fuel use can save significant administrative time and expense.

With about 300 vehicles and pieces of heavy equipment in the Eagle County fleet, the county uses a fleet management program called FASTER, provided by CCG Systems Inc. of Norfolk, Va. ([www.ccgsystems.com](http://www.ccgsystems.com)) FASTER is designed for fleets of 200 vehicles or more, and 90 percent of its users are government fleets. Approximate licensing cost for five user work stations: \$49,000 startup cost, plus around \$7,400 for each subsequent year.

Owners of smaller fleets can use software packages offering varying levels of sophistication. One recommended option is RTA fleet management software provided by Ron Turley Associates of Phoenix, Ariz. ([www.rtafleet.com](http://www.rtafleet.com))

### Gaining fleet efficiency through better operations

Eagle County's utilization study identified two low-use vehicles in the fleet: one assigned to building inspectors and one assigned to information technology. With offices fairly close together, the fleet manager suggested they share one vehicle, and use a hybrid for that shared use.

**Side benefit:** Efficiency changes can be well-received when participants see the benefits. In this case, the shared vehicle freed up about \$5,000 a year in expenses for each department's budget.

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#### Eagle County fleet statistics, 2008

145 pieces of heavy equipment

146 light duty vehicles (cars and trucks)

Annual total miles traveled: 1.1 million

#### Eagle County gasoline use

2006: 152,518 gallons

2007: 121,315 gallons

2008: 104,957 gallons

#### Fuel cost savings

In 2007 versus 2006, Eagle County saved 31,200 gallons of fuel worth about \$88,000 (based on 2007 national gasoline price average of \$2.83)

In 2008 versus 2007, Eagle County saved 16,300 gallons of fuel worth about \$52,000 (based on 2008 national gasoline price average of \$3.20)

If Eagle County had not taken fleet efficiency steps in 2007 and 2008, leaving fuel consumption fixed at 2006 levels, it would have spent about \$152,000 more on gasoline.

Garfield New Energy Communities Initiative is a regional collaboration of local and state governments, nonprofits and clean energy businesses that are joining forces to build a clean energy economy in Garfield County, Colorado.

[www.GarfieldCleanEnergy.org](http://www.GarfieldCleanEnergy.org)

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### Gaining fleet efficiency by using hybrid vehicle technology

In March 2007, Eagle County fleet manager Gusty Kanakis purchased 20 Toyota Prius hybrid cars, making a strong statement for environmental leadership and responsibility. The new cars replaced half the county's light-vehicle fleet, and use half the fuel of the vehicles they replaced. The fuel savings alone to the county is estimated at more than \$21,000 a year. PIC

Eagle County purchased the vehicles at a discount by using the state bid process. The county also received a \$3,013-per-vehicle rebate from the Colorado Department of Revenue. These benefits, plus fuel savings and a higher resale value, are expected to offset the cost premium for purchasing the Prius instead of a standard sedan.

### Gaining fleet efficiency by myth-busting

Eagle County's vehicle efficiency proposals resulted in objections from some users. Instead of seeing that as a roadblock, the fleet staff looked for solutions. For example:

**Myth:** Front-wheel drive and hybrid vehicles don't handle well in snowy conditions, so a four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential.

**Fact:** Mounting Michelin X-ice snow tires on these efficient vehicles gave them more traction than a studded snow tire, while maintaining all-season handling on dry pavement. Drivers noted the safer handling of the Prius with X-ice snow tires, confidently driving the passes on I-70 during a snowstorm. PIC

**Extra tip:** Each Prius and front-wheel drive vehicle is equipped with a snow shovel in case plowing blocks the car in.

"We have a moral and ethical obligation to do everything we can to protect our environment. Converting our fleet is just one way to do our part and live our values."

— Eagle County  
Commissioner  
Arn Menconi

### Gaining fleet efficiency by using the right vehicle for the job

Eagle County's utilization study identified a department where staff drove 4x4 Dodge Durango SUVs 10,000 miles a month for administrative tasks. After switching to Toyota Priuses, the department is saving about \$1,500 per month on gasoline for each SUV replaced.

For years, the county's facilities maintenance staff used full size pickups with expensive after-market truck boxes for tools and equipment. Now the maintenance staff is converting to service vans with customized storage racks inside. The service vans get double the fuel economy of the old trucks.

**Side benefit:** Tools and equipment stored in the minivans stay dry and clean, with no need to clear snow and ice away.

### Gaining fleet efficiency by using a motor pool for low-efficiency vehicles

Pickup trucks are still part of the Eagle County fleet, as they're still the best vehicle for certain jobs.

**Purchasing policy:** Departments requesting to purchase a pickup must prove the need before the purchase can be approved. Pickups approved for purchase usually have diesel engines to improve mileage.

**Motor pool:** For county departments that don't need a pickup year-round, the county motor pool has several available for check-out when a pickup is necessary. Departments can also borrow a pickup from neighboring departments.

### Using a robust fleet maintenance service to make money

Eagle County holds fleet maintenance service contracts with state agencies operating in the county, such as state parks and state patrol. Revenue from this work helps offset the cost of employing trained staff and operating the fleet maintenance facility.

Service contracts cover standard preventive maintenance and repairs and specialized jobs such as body repair and paint. Agencies from as far as Pitkin County use this service.