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VERSION

Fleet & Mobility



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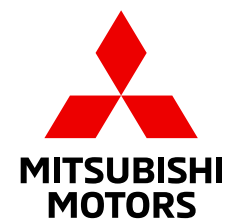
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MAY 2025 / VOL 1 / NO 2 / \$6.95

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Road Test | Chevrolet Equinox EV

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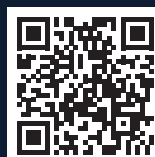
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# Stay Focused

Today's tariff mayhem needs to be managed, without excessive stress.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

I recently had an enlightening conversation with an older gentleman who is 96-years-old, and still as sharp as a tack. Impressed, I said, "You must have good genes." He replied, "Not really. Both my parents died in their 60s." Naturally, I followed up with, "So what's your secret?" He replied, "I sleep well." Puzzled, I inquired further, and that's when he shared a bit of advice that I think we should all take to heart in order to keep our sanity in these challenging times.

His advice was simple, but powerful. "At the end of each day," he explained, "I make peace with the challenges in my life. If it's something I can control, then I make plans to work on it the next day. But if it's something I can't control, then I simply accept it as such, and don't stress over it."

## Advice from our columnists

Admittedly, that's easier said than done, but it's similar to the advice that some of our seasoned columnists will share with you in this issue of Fleet & Mobility magazine.


Both Chris Hill and Kate Vigneau have decades of experience in fleet, both have worked for a variety of organizations, and

both have endured challenges as fleet managers. I encourage you to read their advice, and see how it can be applied in your organization. Both of these seasoned fleet professionals offer practical advice to help you deal with the uncertainties that face our industry as the world suffers from this messy tariff war.

Speaking of columnists, we would like to extend a warm welcome to Maria Neve, NAFA's newly-elected President. You can find her insightful debut column in this issue, and we certainly look forward to hearing from Maria in future issues of this magazine.

## Good advice

Many successful individuals offer the same kind of advice I got from the wise 96-year-old gentleman I mentioned at the outset: Focus on what you can control. In other words, we can worry about everything, including those things that we can't control, and end up driving ourselves insane, or we can figure out what we can control and what we can do, and focus on that.

The latter seems to be the formula to go with in these difficult times, especially if we want to sleep at night and live to 100. 

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Road Test

## Chevrolet Equinox EV: An Electric Solution Tailored to Fleet Operations

The Chevrolet Equinox EV enters the rapidly-evolving automotive market as a practical and compelling choice.

TEXT ISABELLE HAVASY

**T**his compact utility vehicle, launched in spring 2024, suits both fleet managers and individuals attracted to the idea of accessible electrification. With an entry cost set at \$48,325 for the 2 LT version, it already establishes itself as the most affordable electric SUV on the market.

This pricing strategy is no coincidence. “The Equinox targets customers who would have never considered an electric vehicle (EV) due to price,” says Holly Broome, National Marketing Director at Chevrolet. A more economical variant, the 1 LT, expected in 2025, aims to attract even more drivers to electromobility.

### Exemplary range

Chevrolet is banking on range to convince skeptics. With an 85 kWh battery, the front-wheel drive version of the Equinox can travel up to 513 km on a single charge, a performance that far surpasses the competition in its segment. The all-wheel drive versions offer a range of either 463 or 494 kms, depending on the charging module installed. While this range is lower than the front-wheel drive model, AWD versions compensate with increased power, delivering 288 horsepower compared to 213 in the front-wheel drive models. [➤](#)

Beyond its frugal consumption [front-wheel drive: 2.2 Le/100 km (16.5 kWh) — all-wheel drive: 2.3 Le/100 km (18.5 kWh)], the Equinox EV shines with its advanced engineering aimed at maximizing energy efficiency.

Fast charging is another compelling argument. Connected to 150 kW DC current, this utility vehicle recovers 112 km in ten minutes. On a level 2 charger, each hour adds 54 km to the odometer. It's an ideal vehicle for those looking to minimize downtime.

Beyond the numbers, Chevrolet has integrated innovative solutions to optimize energy efficiency. The energy recovery system, based on the Ultium platform, converts heat generated by the motors and battery to power the heat pump. On-demand regeneration mode, one-pedal driving, and pre-conditioning features also aim to preserve range and comfort.

The manufacturer found the right balance when designing this electric utility vehicle. Without seeking to polarize, the Equinox displays a clean and modern style, marked by aerodynamic lines and a distinctive lighting signature. The RS version plays the sporty card, particularly with its glossy black accents and 21-inch tires.

Inside, ergonomics take priority. Thanks to a flat floor, rear seat space is generous, and cargo volume reaches 748 litres (1,614 litres with seats folded). The dashboard combines a



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PHOTOS ISABELLE HAVASY



17.7-inch central screen and an 11-inch digital interface. Google is integrated into the system, but Apple CarPlay is notably absent. Adding the Super Cruise semi-autonomous driving assistant requires an additional expenditure.

### A major fleet ally

This SUV comes well equipped with advanced safety features, including emergency braking, lane keeping assist, and pedestrian and cyclist detection. These standard features reduce accident risks. Applications like myChevrolet and OnStar Fleet Service help facilitate daily vehicle management.

On the road, it impresses with its smooth and quiet driving experience. With 238 lb-ft of torque (333 lb-ft for AWD versions), it doesn't aim for hair-raising acceleration, but offers reassuring performance for passing and recovery.

With its exceptional value, impressive range, and practical technology, the Chevrolet Equinox EV makes a compelling case for mainstream electric vehicle adoption. If Chevrolet maintains this approach, it could reshape the competitive landscape in this fast-evolving market. [🔗](#)



# Counting the Cost of Tariffs

Here are a few alternatives to delaying replacement to help control fleet costs.

TEXT KATHERINE VIGNEAU

**F**leet organizations had barely recovered from the pandemic when budgets were depleted to accommodate increased cleaning, workplace modifications, enhanced technology to allow work from home, and many more changes.

The pandemic ended, but the fleet supply chain (vehicles and parts) did not rebound quickly. In fact, order times on many vehicle types are double that of pre-pandemic days. And now, a new source of uncertainty and potential price increases has arisen.

Tariffs being imposed by the United States government will have far-reaching impacts, and organizations will be faced with difficult decisions on fleet retention and replacement. This would have been challenging any time, but coming so soon after the pandemic, the impact is multiplied.

## Replace vs. repair

All good fleet managers know that you save money by replacing fleet vehicles on time, that is, at the end of their optimal lifecycle. In tough financial times, however, it is tempting to delay the replacement of vehicles. This strategy avoids costly capital replacement, but involves increases to maintenance, fuel costs and downtime. In the end, it costs organizations more, and there are better strategies that a fleet manager can use to save money and avoid delayed replacement.

**Specifications:** I recently worked with a fleet organization that boasted that their selected manufacturer called their ambulance specification "a 13 out of 10," in terms of complexity. In another example, a Fire Department came under scrutiny for taking a standard specification and increasing costs by more than 40% by adding custom features.

Needs-based vs. wants-based specifications should be used so that money is spent on what matters. This is a complicated process, but the use of a specification development committee, an equipment needs survey of end-users, and the adherence to common specifications (including cooperative purchasing agreements) wherever possible will all help in cost containment.

**Right-Sizing:** Tracking fleet utilization and making data-fueled decisions will save an organization money. Conducting




annual utilization reviews, and asking users to justify the retention of spares and lightly-used assets will help grow a mobility and cost-cutting mindset. Not only should the number of assets in the fleet be right-sized for the organization, but all assets should be right-typed for the function they serve.

Organizations should have policies in place for an annual review aimed at identifying assets that should be eliminated, replaced or right-typed. They should also seek opportunities to share or pool assets across departments. Finally, high-usage assets should be regularly rotated with lower-usage assets to balance utilization.

**Mechanic Productivity:** The industry average across government fleets is that mechanics are 70% productive. This means that once breaks, vacations, sick leave and training are considered, a mechanic spends 70% of their time on the shop floor.

If an organization were to invest in a process review and improve productivity by five to 10 percent, savings will result. Process reviews often highlight inefficiencies, such as waiting for, or having to leave the shop to pick up parts, shuffling vehicles between the shop and department locations, or taking vehicles to third-party maintenance providers.

A review will highlight activities that take mechanics off the shop floor and find better solutions to improve productivity. Shop mechanics will complete more work, and reduce downtime and/or work that must be outsourced. It is inevitable that fleet managers are going to be asked to delay fleet replacement when times are tough. Those fleet managers need to ensure decision-makers fully understand that this is a short-term strategy with long-term cost implications, and that there are better ways to improve the efficiency of the operation. 



Kate Vigneau, CAFM, is Director (Fleet and Canada) for Matrix Consulting Group. She is responsible for Matrix's fleet solutions division as well as the lead for expansion in all functional areas related to business in Canada.



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Model shown: 2025 TUCSON N Line Hybrid AWD

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Hybrids &amp; PHEVs

# Plug & Play CUV and Compact SUV Options

These small, fuel-efficient models might be just right for your fleet

TEXT JIL MCINTOSH



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**M**ost hybrids come by their popularity honestly: Their gas-electric operation improves their fuel consumption, and they handle themselves well in everyday traffic. Combine that powertrain with a compact SUV, and you have a light-duty vehicle that will work well for many fleets.

Our list includes hybrids and plug-in hybrids (PHEVs). These can be plugged in and charged to provide a range of electric-only driving. Once that depletes, they automatically revert to self-charging gas-electric hybrid operation. Unlike a fully electric vehicle, a PHEV will continue to drive for as long as there's gas in the tank. While hybrids can be pricier than comparable gasoline-only vehicles, they may make up the difference with their fuel savings. Our power numbers are for combined gasoline and electric, and cargo capacity is the range with the rear seats upright and folded down. 



### Hyundai Tucson Hybrid/PHEV

The Tucson gets a major update for 2025. Its powertrain carries over unchanged, but it gets new exterior and interior styling, along with upgrades such as a 12.3-inch centre touchscreen and new gearshift selector. While much of it goes higher-tech, the climate controls are now dials, which can reduce distraction. The hybrid powertrain is available in the Tucson's top N Line and Ultimate trims. The PHEV is a further option on the Ultimate, and all are AWD.

#### THE SPECS:

- **1.6-litre turbocharged I4:** 231 hp/258 torque (Hybrid); 268 hp/258 torque (PHEV)
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 6.3 city, 6.6 highway, 6.4 combined (Hybrid); 6.7 city, 6.8 highway, 6.7 combined (PHEV)
- **PHEV Battery-Only Range:** 51 km
- **Cargo Capacity:** 1,097 – 2,108 litres (Hybrid); 902 – 1,876 litres (PHEV)
- **Towing Capacity:** 2,000 lbs



### Ford Escape Hybrid/PHEV

The Ford Escape offers an optional hybrid powertrain on all but its lowest trim level, while the PHEV is a stand-alone model. There are no major changes for 2025, other than some new features, including a space-saver spare tire in place of a sealant kit. The Escape Hybrid is available in FWD or AWD, while the PHEV is FWD only.

#### THE SPECS:

- **2.5-litre I4:** 163 hp/155 torque (Hybrid); 210 hp/155 torque (PHEV)
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 5.6 city, 6.5 highway, 6.0 combined (Hybrid); 5.6 city, 6.3 highway, 5.9 combined (PHEV)
- **PHEV Battery-Only Range:** 60 km
- **Cargo Capacity:** 1,062 – 1,862 litres
- **Towing Capacity:** 1,500 lbs



### Kia Sportage Hybrid/PHEV

The Kia Sportage is a mechanical sibling to the Hyundai Tucson, save for slight differences in engine power, but got a redesign in 2023 and so it's unchanged for 2025. Like the Tucson, the Sportage starts out with a gas-only version, but from there, the Sportage's Hybrid and PHEV models each come in two trim levels. All are standard with AWD.

#### THE SPECS:

- **1.6-litre turbocharged I4:** 227 hp/258 torque (Hybrid); 261 hp/258 torque (PHEV)
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 6.1 city, 6.3 highway, 6.2 combined (Hybrid); 6.6 city, 6.7 highway, 6.7 combined (PHEV)
- **PHEV Battery-Only Range:** 55 km
- **Cargo Capacity:** 977 – 1,855 litres
- **Towing Capacity:** 2,000 lbs



### Mazda CX-50 Hybrid

While the gas-only CX-50 has been around for a while, a hybrid version is an all-new addition for 2025. It's built in the same Toyota-Mazda joint facility in Alabama as the Corolla Cross Hybrid, and the CX-50's hybrid powertrain is sourced from Toyota. It comes in three trim levels and AWD is standard on all trims.

#### THE SPECS:

- **2.5-litre I4:** 219 hp/163 torque
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 6.1 city, 6.4 highway, 6.2 combined
- **Cargo Capacity:** 826 – 1,595 litres
- **Towing Capacity:** 1,500 lbs



### Subaru Forester e-Boxer Hybrid

The Forester e-Boxer Hybrid is an all-new model for 2025, and the top model in the otherwise-gas-only Forester lineup. Its all-new hybrid system was developed by Subaru using hybrid components from Toyota, and with Subaru's standard AWD system. Expect to see this hybrid powertrain in an upcoming all-new Subaru Crosstrek, too.

#### THE SPECS:

- **2.5-litre flat-four:** 194 hp/199 torque
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 6.8 city, 7.0 highway, 6.9 combined
- **Cargo Capacity:** 779 – 1,957 litres
- **Towing Capacity:** 1,500 lbs



### Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV

The Outlander is one of the few mainstream models that comes in gasoline-only or PHEV, with no hybrid. For 2025, it adds a new mid-level SE trim. All trims are AWD. In addition to electric operation on the stored charge, it can operate in parallel hybrid mode, where the engine powers the front wheels with electric assist, or in series hybrid mode, where the engine acts as a generator to provide electricity to the electric motors. Unusually for a PHEV, it can be fast-charged.

#### THE SPECS:

- **2.4-litre I4:** 248 hp/332 torque
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 9.2 city, 8.7 highway, 9.0 combined
- **PHEV Battery-Only Range:** 61 km
- **Cargo Capacity:** 362 – 1,832 litres
- **Towing Capacity:** 1,500 lbs



### Toyota RAV4/PHEV

The RAV4 is Toyota's top-selling vehicle in Canada. It's mostly unchanged for 2025, except that the plug-in model was previously the RAV4 Prime and is now called the RAV4 PHEV. The RAV4 Hybrid comes in five trims, while the Prime is available in two. Both versions come standard with AWD.

#### THE SPECS:

- **2.5-litre I4:** 219 hp/163 torque (Hybrid); 300 hp/165 torque (PHEV)
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 5.8 city, 6.3 highway, 6.0 combined (Hybrid); 5.7 city, 6.4 highway, 6.0 combined (PHEV)
- **PHEV Battery-Only Range:** 68 km
- **Cargo Capacity:** 1,059 – 1,977 litres (Hybrid); 949 – 1,977 litres (PHEV)
- **Towing Capacity:** 1,750 lbs (Hybrid); 2,500 lbs (PHEV)



### Toyota Corolla Cross Hybrid

The Corolla Cross was originally introduced to replace the C-HR subcompact SUV, and then added a hybrid version for 2023. It's unchanged for 2025. It comes in two trim levels and with standard AWD. It's built on the same architecture as the Corolla sedan, and in the joint Toyota-Mazda plant that also builds the Mazda CX-50 Hybrid.

#### THE SPECS:

- **2.0-litre I4:** 196 hp/139 torque
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 5.2 city, 6.2 highway, 5.6 combined
- **Cargo Capacity:** 609 – 1,750 litres
- **Towing Capacity:** 1,500 lbs



### Volvo XC60 PHEV

Volvo's XC60 also comes as a mild hybrid, which uses an electric motor to assist the gas engine, but can't drive on electricity alone. Here, we're looking at its plug-in sibling. It's the sportiest and most powerful on the list, with standard AWD and with a premium cabin and features across its four trim levels.

#### THE SPECS:

- **2.0-litre turbocharged I4:** 455 hp/523 torque
- **Fuel Economy, L/100 km:** 8.5 city, 8.5 highway, 8.5 combined
- **PHEV Battery-Only Range:** 58 km
- **Cargo Capacity:** 468 – 1,395 litres
- **Towing Capacity:** 3,483 lbs



Fleet Electrification:

## When Homes Become Charging Stations

Fleet electrification continues to gain momentum.

TEXT ISABELLE HAVASY

**F**leet electrification raises numerous technical and financial questions, when it comes to ensuring employees can charge their work vehicles at home. Charging issues aren't just electrical. They're also organizational. What type of charging station to choose? Should it have an open or closed protocol? Who handles the installation? How do you calculate and reimburse the energy used? Should it generate revenue?

These questions are routine for BEQ Technology. Operating as a charging station specialist since 2018, this company offers businesses a straightforward approach: comprehensive service from initial needs evaluation through to after-sales support, covering selection, installation, and upkeep of both physical equipment and management systems. While the company sells peace-of-mind, it comes at a price. And this price varies depending on anticipated

growth, requirements, as well as the complexity of the infrastructure and power capacity constraints of the facility where the charging equipment will be installed.

"You have to think about load controllers and consumption peaks. Otherwise, the bill could climb quickly," points out Éliot Mathieu-Proteau, Legal Affairs and Strategic Partnerships Manager at BEQ Technology. Connected charging stations make it possible to regulate these loads, control access during peak times, and set user priorities to avoid expensive demand surcharges.

The BEQ Technology team interviews clients to get a thorough understanding of their present and future requirements before providing recommendations, notes Yannick Lemelin, Customer Service Coordinator at BEQ Technology. "We ensure clients fully comprehend each element, because making changes afterward often requires massive costs."



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BEQ Technology specializes in the simplification of this process. “Each location is different. We look at the electrical service entrance and the parking layout to offer a tailored solution,” explains Mathieu-Proteau. Their product range includes smart models compatible with advanced management software, capable of controlling access, measuring consumption, and even limiting charging power during peak periods.

### A long-term perspective

The secret to successful implementation lies in planning. BEQ Technology advises companies to adopt a long-term perspective. How many vehicles will be added in the coming years? Can the infrastructure keep up? Should the groundwork be prepared for 10 stations, even if current needs only require two? “A poorly chosen charging station today can be expensive tomorrow, if everything needs to be re-done,” warns Mathieu-Proteau.

At Énergir, home charging isn’t a service to sell, but a necessity to manage. The company has launched a massive fleet electrification project, with the goal of converting 100% of their light-duty vehicle fleet by 2030. The project, which began in 2023, currently includes nearly 150 light-duty vehicles, with a target of 600.

Most of these are Ford E-Transit vans, and in Énergir’s business model, these vehicles go home with their drivers after each work shift. A well-managed electrified fleet can generate significant savings, but once charging extends beyond the professional setting, its management becomes more complex.

The first candidates to receive a branded electric van were selected based on their daily usage profile, notes Julien Dolléans, Director of Fleet and Building Projects at Énergir. “Then we assessed whether installing a home charging station was possible at a reasonable cost. To qualify, applicants needed to be homeowners who had private parking,” he adds.

Every installation begins with a phone consultation, followed by an on-site technical assessment to prevent unexpected complications. “Vehicle demand exceeded our supply,” notes Dolléans, “which meant we could simply proceed to the next candidate if we encountered infrastructure or installation limitations.”

### A new charging station technology

For the first phase of their electrification plan, Énergir used non-connected Level 2 charging stations rated at 40 amps. The company is now ready to implement a new standard using Quebec-manufactured 48-amp units that are highly cost-efficient. “While these stations are connected, we don’t use this functionality to extract consumption data. However, employees can still take advantage of the app if they want to,” Dolléans says.

The electricity reimbursement process at Énergir is particularly innovative. Instead of manual readings or complicated calculations, the system operates completely through

telematics. “All our vehicles are equipped with telematics,” explains Dolléans. “It measures all the energy entering the vehicle, and transfers the data to our in-house operating system, which manages everything confidentially.”

A geofencing feature automatically records charging sessions that happen within a virtual zone around employees’ homes. Reimbursements are processed weekly and added directly to paycheques, calculated according to Hydro-Québec’s rate structure.

The calculation method even includes an additional factor to compensate for the small amount of energy lost in the charging station and wiring.

At both Énergir and BEQ Technology, one thing is clear: technology is evolving rapidly, and industry practices need to keep up. “Will the Level 2 home charging station still be the solution in five years? We don’t know,” Dolléans admits.

He mentions emerging developments in larger-capacity batteries, new chemistries, and ultra-fast charging stations capable of replenishing a charge in just a few minutes. Both organizations are closely monitoring these advances while remaining anchored in current field realities.

For now, home charging is establishing itself as an essential piece of the electrification puzzle. It requires informed choices, precise management, and above all, strategic foresight. Service providers and utilities alike share a common understanding: Without comprehensive planning, even the best electrification initiatives can fall short. [O](#)



“Will the Level 2 home charging station still be the solution in five years? We don’t know,”

**JULIEN DOLLÉANS**  
DIRECTOR OF FLEET AND BUILDING PROJECTS  
ÉNERGIR

# War Plans

How to prepare your fleet for the global tariff war.

TEXT CHRIS HILL

So far, 2025 has been the most unpredictable and unusual year that we have faced in a very long time. Now is a good time to position fleet as a strong enabler within your organization. Whether your fleet is operated in the private sector or the public sector, it cannot be an impediment when so much uncertainty is present. I suggest organizing your plans less along the lines of business in a fleet (vehicle selection, fuel, maintenance, record-keeping, loss prevention and so on), and more aligned with your organization's business structure. These most often fall into the five principal management functions.

**1. Finance.** Fleet needs to work with the finance people to ensure that acquisition and replacement cycles are affordable in light of current interest rates and access to capital. Capital spending will be put on hold. Lease versus own should be re-visited to ensure the best option is being used. Vehicle replacement schedules need to be reconsidered in light of uncertain new vehicle prices and the possibility of disruption to vehicle manufacturing. It won't be business as usual, and the early signals will be seen in the automotive sector.

**2. Information Technology.** It may be time to look at how you gather and process data and measure the performance of your fleet, and whether this is done using in-house resources or an external provider. The information needs to be relevant and support good decision making. Knowing the whole cost of fleet is important to senior management.

**3. Operations.** This can extend to many people outside the fleet department, especially in fleets that are operating in many different provinces or cities. Ask how you would manage if those people in other locations weren't there in the near future. It happened to me when I was fleet manager for a multinational company with branches across the country. It decided that administrative



Fleet needs to work with the finance people to ensure that acquisition and replacement cycles are affordable.


employees weren't necessary at the branches, and most were terminated. My local coordinators were suddenly missing, and I needed to solve this. Our fleet card provider helped.

**4. Human Resources.** Organizations need to think hard about head count in these unpredictable times (see the point above). If you have in-house maintenance facilities, this could be a target for outsource attacks. Employee retention is still important. Fleet managers must treat their employees as their top priority.

**5. Marketing and Communication.** I was involved in both the Ontario and federal election campaigns this year.

Two things were plain to see: fear and anger. I have never witnessed either of these to the extent I saw going door-to-door. Understanding and reassurance is needed at every level, and if you can help with that, people can get through their workday

faster and with less stress. Keep the messaging positive and authentic. Be truthful about problems, especially if employees are anxious and distracted.

I have often heard fleet managers say, "Fleet is not your mother," when describing their relationships with their user groups. No it's not, but it should be their trusted friend, resource and enabler. 



Chris Hill is Fleet Management Advisor at C. Hill Management Inc.

Now is a good time to position fleet as a strong enabler within your organization.

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## Electrification of Commercial Transportation

## Towards Smart Energy Consumption

Decarbonization ambitions in commercial transportation, and the acceleration of fleet electrification, are putting increased pressure on the public power grid.

TEXT GUILLAUME BROSSARD

The surge in energy demands created by fleet electrification could lead to higher supply and infrastructure costs, resulting in more expensive electricity bills. For this reason, it is imperative to manage the energy associated with the electrical transition more efficiently and intelligently.

### Smart charging optimization

The best way to reduce the need for new energy supplies is to deploy energy efficiency measures, because as one of my mentors in the energy sector would say, “The best energy is the energy we don’t consume.” The second is to optimize what is already available. This is the role of a smart charging management platform like Cleo. By automating the energy delivered to electric vehicles at charging stations, the Cleo platform can reduce the power needed to charge a fleet by up to 70%. Advanced algorithms maximize vehicle charging efficiency, and ensure smooth and reliable fleet operations, while reducing electric bills. Electric vehicles are therefore ready to start their routes on time, as usual, but at a lower energy cost.

The positive effect is not limited to fleet operations. This reduction in maximum power at a charging site simultaneously relieves pressure on the public power grid.

### Power demand management

Another way to manage energy efficiently is by reducing the power used by electric vehicle fleets during critical periods for the grid, which often occur during the severe cold of winter.

A smart platform can shift up to 85% of the kWh away from times when grid power consumption is very high by advancing or delaying the charging activities of commercial vehicles without affecting operations. This load-shifting away from peak events, made at the energy provider’s request, mostly in the morning or at the end of the day, can benefit both the resilience of the network and the fleet manager.

That’s why in the winter of 2024-2025, Polara launched a pilot project with Hydro-Québec for power management during peak events. In total, around 15 sites participated in this first winter edition, with an estimated load-shifting of more



Example of shifting charging away from peak events on the Cleo smart platform.

than 3 MW during about ten events. In return, participating customers receive a credit on their electricity bill, based on the power shifted during these peak periods, which could amount to several thousand dollars.

### Other strategies for energy efficiency

Other initiatives, such as using vehicle batteries as mini power plants, or installing Distributed Energy Resources (DER), can help reduce pressure on the public power grid.

To promote energy efficiency in Canada, various strategies can be prioritized. For instance, we recommend implementing financial incentives for subscribing to a charging and power management optimization software that is compatible with the local grid. This could take the form of a subsidy for the monthly costs associated with using such software. It’s a win-win situation for everyone involved, from EV fleet operators, who can monetize their transition, to public utilities, who can get a better return on their investment in the management of their power grids. [🔗](#)



Vice President of Commercial at Polara Energy Inc., Guillaume has over 20 years of experience in commercialization and the development of major infrastructure projects across the energy, marine, and real estate sectors, as well as in commercial law.

# Collaboration and Communication

These key aspects of a fleet manager's role are hugely important as we navigate through uncertain times.

TEXT MARIA NEVE

It is an incredible honour for me to take on the role as NAFA Board President in 2025, and I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who encouraged and voted for me to seek out this position. It's a huge responsibility, and it comes at a pivotal time in the fleet management industry.

There is a lot of uncertainty out there, and a lot of changes are coming thick and fast. That's why it's so important to have an association that is able to stay current with all these trends, and keep our members informed. Whether it's fleet managers and fleet professionals, vendors or consultants, we're all in this together and collectively, we will navigate through it.

## Collaboration and engagement

Like many in this industry, I didn't start out in fleet management. I went to law school and served in advocacy roles in Washington D.C.. Working in that capacity, and becoming passionate about legislative issues, is what led me to NAFA. And once I got into the fleet management space, I never looked back. I joined NAFA's Government Affairs Committee in 2014, and since then, I've really gained appreciation for the level of work NAFA does on behalf of its members, and what the association means to the industry. It really does emphasize the importance of leadership, innovation and collaboration. The role of a fleet manager is one that is incredibly cross-functional. You work with a whole range of different people and departments/organizations, including human resources, finance, legal and risk assessment. Being able to operate effectively in this environment requires a high level of collaboration and engagement. This is why it's so important to have an industry association that understands the challenges fleet managers and others in the industry face on a daily basis.

Among the biggest issues currently facing the industry are supply chains and electrification. The issue of tariffs could have wide-reaching implications when it comes to supply chains, as well as vehicle availability, maintenance, not to mention the costs associated with delivering products and solutions to our customers.

## Caveats to consider

Electrification is another big topic for fleets. Over the last dec-

ade, we've seen a ramp-up in creating more sustainable fleets and federal governments (both in the U.S. and Canada) provide incentives and regulation toward greater electrification. There are, however, caveats to consider.

Change in federal governments can have a profound impact on regulations and incentives, which is why it's so important for fleet managers to be active when it comes to advocacy and communicating with legislators. An example is the Advanced Clean Fleets Regulation that California announced to promote zero-emission commercial trucks. In concept, the notion of creating more environmentally-sustainable fleets, and improving air quality is a noble one. However, unless you consider the realities of operating a fleet today, such regulations can be very difficult, not to mention costly to achieve.

## A voice for the industry

That's why it's so important that we, as fleet professionals, have a voice when it comes to state, provincial and federal governments. Not only does this help lawmakers understand what fleet managers do, but it also creates dialogue to ensure that when regulations are introduced, they are done so in a fair and reasonable manner. NAFA has, and continues to be, a great resource for this, and it's important for all of us to get involved.

As this article was being written, the annual NAFA I&E conference (April 28-30) in Long Beach, California was fast approaching. I&E provides a unique opportunity for fleet management professionals to come together, gain insight into the current trends shaping the industry, as well as share knowledge, ideas, and celebrate everything our incredible industry has to offer. It's something I look forward to every year, and it represents one facet of an industry that has given me so much, that I'm honoured to serve it. [O](#)



Maria Neve is Vice President of eFMC Services, Inspiration Mobility and serves as NAFA Board President.

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2025 NAFA I&amp;E

# Forward and Upward

Action packed fleet expo had something for everyone.

TEXT HUW EVANS

April 28-30 saw NAFA Fleet Management Association host the 2025 Institute & Expo (I&E) in Long Beach, California. Three days of action-packed general sessions, education breakouts, on-site training, CAFM programs and ample networking awaited attendees, as well as an onsite vendor showcase, electric vehicle indoor test track and a ride-and-drive.

## Propel your fleet

The theme this year was “Propel Your Fleet” and there were a number of major announcements, including NAFA’s philanthropic partnership with the Hourglass Foundation. Newly-elected NAFA Board President Maria Neve noted that NAFA continues to grow its membership, with more than 3400 fleet professionals and organizations now registered.

The event also witnessed the very first Tom Johnson Award, for excellence in the fleet industry. The recipient was Patti Earley, CAFM, Fleet Fuel Manager, Florida Power & Light.

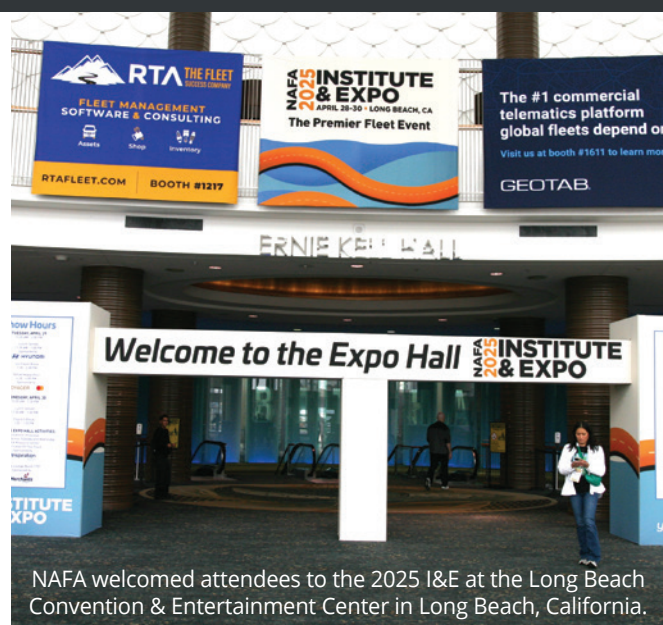
We also witnessed the 100 Best Fleets of the Americas awards, recognizing both public and commercial fleets. The winners were Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office (Florida) for public, and Charge Inc. for commercial fleets.

The fleet professional of the year honours went to Thomas Keyser from Spire Energy, while Roger Davis, from the City of Roanoke, Va., was named fleet technician of the year.

## Tariffs and trade

Perhaps not surprisingly, tariffs and trade were front-and-centre at the event, with plenty of discussion revolving around the ever-changing status and implementation plans from the U.S. federal government.

How fleets should adapt and meet the challenges resulting from these tariffs was the focus of several workshops, as well as Tuesday’s OEM panel discussion (look for a future article in Fleet & Mobility specifically on this topic).



NAFA welcomed attendees to the 2025 I&E at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center in Long Beach, California.

Other highlights included some very inspiring keynotes, including one from Tim Padandreu of ETA Advisors, who discussed the fast-changing world around us, and how emerging technologies are shaping the future of the world and the fleet industry.

Papandreu explained that technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning won’t replace humans. Rather, they’ll enhance our roles by taking care of the more mundane tasks so that we can have more time and be more efficient at what we do.

## Supersonic success

Another inspirational keynote came from Captain Jack Becker, a former U.S. Naval Aviator. Becker shared his experiences as a fighter/attack pilot, and said that having a team is critical to executing any successful military plan.

He noted that standardization is key to success, and that in naval aviation circles, standardization has completely transformed carrier landings, which are one of the most dangerous aspects of naval aviation, especially when they take place at night.

Similarly, standardized processes for fleet managers can result in many benefits, including better driver training and safety, more efficient delivery of goods and services, and lower operating costs.

Becker discussed the need to respond to threats, whether active (visible), or latent (not always easily identifiable). Addressing latent threats and identifying them early on can make a huge difference, and can help what he termed “drifting”: letting standards slide and veering off course due to external factors.

That’s why it is so critical for fleet managers to rely on their teams, much like combat pilots rely on their wingmen, since doing so can not only save businesses, but out on the road, also save lives. [👉](#)

## Predictive Maintenance

# Big Savings, Better Results

Geotab Connect session revealed multiple benefits from having accessible, real time data analytics.

TEXT HUW EVANS

Vehicle maintenance is a huge factor in fleet operations and how vehicles are serviced and how those services and repairs are planned can have a major impact on operational efficiency and profitability.

### Hugely beneficial

Therefore, any solutions that can provide predictive analysis when it comes to maintenance and downtime are seen as hugely beneficial. That's why the Predictive Maintenance Panel Discussion at the 2025 Geotab Connect Conference in Orlando, Fla., drew such a large interest among attendees, especially when the panel got an opportunity to discuss a case study from Sperry Rail Service.

Hosting the discussion was Ricky Rivera, Product Manager at Geotab, with the panel featuring Paul Haida, Product Manager; Hanna Koke, Senior Team Lead, Data and Analytics, and Peter Erickson, Director of North American Fleet Maintenance at Sperry Rail Service.

To underline just how important vehicle maintenance is for fleets, Paul Haida provided some statistics that showed that of 3 million vehicles that have maintenance diagnostics, roughly 1 million will experience some form of breakdown. This translates to approximately 0.74 breakdowns per 100,000 miles (160,000 km), equivalent to 8.74 billion days of unplanned maintenance. From a cost perspective, that results in around \$4.34 billion in unplanned maintenance based on \$100 per day).

### Safety factors

That's a staggering amount and furthermore, vehicles that are not properly maintained also impact safety for the driver, for the fleet company and for other road users, not to mention can add to other costs including tire wear and fuel usage. Haida noted that over the last two years, Geotab has spent

a lot of time talking with its customers and to really gain an understanding about what maintenance means to them and how to prioritize decisions based on the metrics and data that's available to them.

Hanna Koke stressed the importance of the adage that "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it." She also said that in the cycle of maintenance needs, breakdown is a huge factor, but so are vehicle collisions and the towing that's required after they crash.


### Towing and service analytics

Koke said that towing can prove very costly for fleets and it's one reason why Geotab has been focusing on providing data from these situations, including when these vehicles are towed to a service centre for repairs.

Looking at a specific case study, Peter Erickson provided a fascinating insight into how predictive maintenance and data analytics can really provide benefits for fleets that use these tools effectively. He noted that Sperry Rail Service, due to its business model, has some very unique operating requirements. Much of Sperry's equipment is used for non-destructive testing of railroad tracks, meaning that it is highly specialized and when a vehicle breaks down or is sidelined, the team can't pick up a replacement box truck or flatbed from a local rental or leasing company. Erickson noted that for years, Sperry struggled when it came to maintenance requirements which he described as "herding cats."

Working with Geotab changed all that, and today, Sperry Rail has a platform where all the company's data can be kept in a single place. No longer does it take days to find a specific report, everything is right there, in one place, all the time.

### Tailored to requirements

Erickson said that partnering with Ricky Rivera and his team, allowed Sperry to develop a maintenance platform that was tailored specifically to the company's unique needs, one that allows Sperry Rail to communicate regularly with its team of remote technicians and determine where they are; the condition of their vehicles and equipment and assign them a job based on detailed information that Geotab's platform provides. Erickson noted that now, with this solution and data access, Sperry Rail, for the first time, has real cost controls when it comes to fleet maintenance, and can accurately determine when its vehicles and equipment will require maintenance and build a true cost of ownership for every unit it operates. 

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Sailun Tire Americas

# Top Tires for Tough Times

In a global environment of economic uncertainty, Sailun continues to be the dependable value-priced option for fleets that need quality truck tires.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

**F**leet budgets are hard enough to manage in the best of times. Today, with the on again / off again tariffs, and the roller-coaster of price fluctuations and currency values, it's more difficult than ever for fleet managers to price future purchases, whether they're buying vehicles, car parts, fuel or tires.

Who could have imagined that in 2025 we would all be waking each morning wondering what kind of tariff would be announced, and how it might impact the price we would all soon have to pay for a variety of goods? With an unpredictable tariff war escalating and de-escalating on what seems to be a weekly or even daily basis, today's fleet professionals are stuck in the middle wondering how to manage their ever-tighter budgets.

## Depend on Sailun

When it comes to tires, it's difficult to predict what they will cost the next time you need to make a major purchase for your fleet. Depending on where the tires were manufactured, and what kind of tariff happens to be in effect at the time of purchase, you may end up paying a lot more for your truck tires than you anticipated.

Currently (at the time of writing) any tires coming from the United States are subject to a 25% tariff, if you're importing them into Canada. This means that fleet managers who are used to purchasing certain brands of tires for their fleets will likely see an increase in the price of these tires, if they're coming from the U.S.A. ➤

Made for delivery trucks, regional trucks and tow trucks, the Sailun S737SP promises an extended tire life and improved retreadability.

This year, the old adage, "We always bought this brand of tires for our trucks," simply doesn't make financial sense anymore, and fleet professionals need to think outside the proverbial box at solutions that do.

Fortunately, when it comes to tariffs, Sailun has an advantage that some other tire brands don't. "Since our tires are produced in multiple countries outside of China, which seems to be hit the hardest by tariffs, our tires are not currently subject to tariffs in Canada, which means we can continue to provide our fleet customers with the quality they demand, at a price they can afford, especially now," says James McIntyre, SVP Sales Canada / Product Development North America, Sailun Tire Americas.

Whether you need LT tires for your light- and medium-duty truck fleet, long-haul tires for your Class 8 trucks, or anything in between, Sailun offers the quality and the price-point that makes sense in our topsy-turvy tariff-on / tariff-off world.

"When every penny counts for Canadians, we offer the quality and value today's fleets need now, more than ever," McIntyre adds. "Even before tariffs were an issue, our value proposition was second to none. Now that we're seeing economic storm clouds amassing on the horizon, we continue to offer our fleet customers the quality they need and the value pricing they've come to expect from Sailun. That hasn't changed."

### Sailun Has You Covered

Regardless of the type of truck fleet you manage, Sailun has you covered. Here's a quick look at some of the more noteworthy tires in Sailun's broad offering. From light-duty pickups to Class 8 trucks, and everything in between, Sailun has a tire to fit your needs at a value price you can count on.



Sailun Tire Americas offers quality tires to handle tough conditions.

### Solid warranties

In addition to offering a solid value proposition, Sailun also stands behind their products with comprehensive warranties that provide extra peace of mind for fleet professionals. Their 3-Point Warranty provides customers with the following



### Sailun SDL70: Premium deep closed shoulder drive tire

Both line-haul and regional trucks will benefit from the engineering excellence that has been invested in the design of this tire.

The SDL70 EFT boasts a 240 mm wide footprint and a 30/32" tread depth to deliver maximum mileage, stability and ride comfort.



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that rival what some of the better-known brands offer. In some cases, our coverage even exceeds what other major brands offer, and we have a Roadside Hazard Warranty on tires for both medium-duty and heavy-duty trucks. Frankly, that's simply unheard of in our industry. To be blunt, we stand behind our products to a degree that other tire companies don't."

To illustrate his point, McIntyre offers the following hypothetical example: "If one of your trucks is hauling rebar and the driver happens to run over a piece of steel and puncture a tire, we'll help you pay for a replacement, if the damage took place within the first six months that you own the tire."

Although it's impossible to predict the future, and no one knows how the economy will perform, or what kind of price hikes we'll see whenever the still-to-be-determined tariffs come into play, one thing is for sure: Sailun has always delivered a quality product at a value price, backed by a solid warranty. That will never change.

Furthermore, since they manufacturer their tires in multiple countries, which haven't been impacted by tariffs till now, Sailun can continue to offer their top-notch products at prices that fleet professionals can count on, and take advantage of, in order to minimize spend and maximize value in these challenging times. [O](#)

benefits: Coverage for Defects in Workmanship and Materials, an 8 year/3 Retread Guarantee, and a Road Hazard Replacement Program.

"These are best-in-class warranties, bar none," McIntyre adds. "We stand behind our products with warranties



#### Sailun S637SP:

##### Regional all-position tire

Engineered for a broad range of applications, including delivery trucks, regional trucks, trailers, and tow trucks, the S637SP is a versatile regional all-position tire designed to optimize stability, scrub resistance and wear. To further extend tire life and improve retreadability, it's enhanced with sidewall protection ribs to withstand curb abrasion and sidewall cuts common in the last mile delivery segment.



#### Sailun S759:

##### Premium regional drive tire

Designed for regional trucks, delivery trucks and tow trucks, the S759 is a premium regional drive tire made to deliver superior on- and off-road performance. The open shoulder siped block design, in conjunction with the zigzag lugs, provides all the traction required for any weather or road conditions. 3PMS-certified, it provides outstanding handling and stability in the most demanding winter driving conditions..



#### Sailun S737SP:

##### Regional drive tire

Made for delivery trucks, regional trucks and tow trucks, the S737SP promises an extended tire life and improved retreadability. The sidewall protection ribs allow this tire to withstand curb abrasion and sidewall cuts common in the last mile delivery segment. 3PMS-certified, the S737SP meets the industry's severe snow service requirements, ensuring year-round traction in all weather conditions.

# Beyond the Basics

Consider all the options before ordering your next box truck.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI



If you've ever had to order a box truck and spec it yourself, you know how many choices you need to consider. Besides all the engine and chassis options, you'll need to think about the box itself, and that alone can be a daunting task.

According to Brian Hickok, Strategic Business Advisor-Fleet at Element Fleet Management some of the most common choices fleet managers have to consider include the roof materials, liftgate types, lighting options, flooring materials, and much more.

"It really depends on the intended purpose or use of the truck," Hickok says. "There are application guides and resources, as well as upfit truck application specialists, like here at Element, that can guide fleet professionals, and make appropriate recommendations to help them choose the options that are compliant, and that will work best for each customer."

## Purpose built

Joe Birren, Regional Engineering Manager at Holman agrees that expert advice is a must. "My question, from the outset, is what's the mission of the truck," he says. "Is it for dry freight goods, is it last-mile delivery, is it refrigerated, and so on."

Birren says that when he gets a call from a fleet manager who needs a new box truck, the first thing he does is stop by for a site visit. "I ride along to really understand how they are using the truck, how they are loading and unloading it," he explains. "I also want to know about weight. If a customer tells me that they need to replace a particular truck, I'll tell them to weigh it when it's empty, then weigh it again when it's loaded the way it would be on a normal day. That will help them see their payload weight."

When it comes to the box itself, Birren notes that fleet managers need to decide which body structure is best. Depending

on budget and weight requirements, the most common options include aluminum, fibreglass reinforced plywood, and composite materials.

## Lighting options

If you're operating primarily during the daytime, Birren adds, you can opt for a translucent roof. Otherwise, you would need to consider what kind of lighting you would like inside the box. If security is an issue, or if you're in an area that gets a lot of hail, then an aluminum roof might be a better option.

"As far as lighting goes, you'll need to decide how many lights

you want and whether you want them to be motion-activated, or if you prefer a switch at the door," Birren adds.

Furthermore, you'll need to consider what kind of walls you want: full plywood, slat or exposed. "You also have to consider what kind of cargo management you need," Birren adds. "If you require D-rings for tie-down straps to secure cargo to the floor, what kind of spacing do you require? And for E-track, how many rows and at what height from the floor do they need to be installed?"

Another key consideration, he adds, is whether the truck needs to be dock height. "How do you plan to load and unload the truck," he says. "Will you be driving a forklift into the body? If so, you'll need to reinforce the floors and add scuff plates all around. It's really ugly when you drive a forklift into a body that's not designed for it."

Birren recommends investing in a tread plate that can take some abuse. "Make sure you build up that threshold plate at the back where the door is," he says. "If you're going to be loading with a forklift, dropping the load into the body, and then people are going to move the load with a pallet jack into the body, it's good to reinforce the back with a nice big tread plate that's going to take the abuse."

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## Door options

One of the reasons why Birren is a big fan of a ride along is because it allows him to see what kind of door, ramp and liftgate options make the most sense. "Maybe a side door is needed," he explains. "Do you want access without having to open the rear cargo door? What kind of side door would you like? How far from the front of the body does it need to be? And what kind of steps would you like?"

Birren says that something as simple as a side door can make a big difference, but it's a feature that you might not realize you need, unless you ride along with the truck driver to see how items are loaded or unloaded during their work day. "It's easy to miss this kind of detail," he adds, "and I often hear how much a side door would be appreciated by the driver because they wouldn't always have to open the rear door. Also, a side door is a big benefit when you're loading or unloading at the side of a street."

## Liftgate and rear door options

When it comes to liftgates, Birren explains that there are quite a few options to choose from. "You have the more common types, like a tuck-under liftgate, which can be stowed under the back

of the truck. They're typically only good up to about 5,500 lbs." A larger liftgate, like a rail-lift, is a good option if you need something that can handle more weight. For example, if you're constantly unloading larger items like heavy machinery. Another option is a cantilever liftgate, which sits vertically against the back doors of the truck when not in use.

You'll also have to decide between a swing-out or roll-up rear door. "Each have their benefits," Birren says. "The swing-out doors can rotate all the way to the side of the truck, and they're a good option when you need to optimize height, because you don't have to worry about space for the door to roll into. But if you're loading within an alleyway or an area where cars are parked around you, swing-out doors can be an issue."

## Remarketing

Birren offers one final piece of advice for fleet managers: "Try to design a truck that other people will want to buy," he concludes. "Stick to what's common, what will likely be in demand, and try to avoid too much customization. For example, even if you only need an 18 or 22-ft. box, stick to 26 feet, since it's a common size, and it will be a lot easier to sell." [🔗](#)



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# Punching Above Their Weight Class

Stuck in the middle, between light- and heavy-duty vehicles, medium-duty trucks are often pushed beyond their limits.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

**M**edium-duty trucks are sometimes called upon to do more than they were designed to handle, resulting in wear and tear issues that fleet managers need to be aware of.

Like the often-misunderstood middle child, medium-duty trucks are stuck between their light-duty and heavy-duty siblings, and according to Brian Hickok, Strategic Business Advisor-Fleet at Element Fleet Management, that's not always a good thing.

"Medium-duty [trucks] are in the middle of these three main classifications," he says, "so they are often utilized hard in certain operations because fleets/companies might have multiple jobs they use them for."

ly to experience wear and tear issues with the following components and parts, listed in order from most to least often: transmission, electrical, drive line, engine, brakes, air conditioning, suspension and tires.

Of course, much depends on how these trucks are used. Brake issues, for example, will be a major wear and tear issue with trucks that spend most of their time in stop-and-go conditions within a city, or travelling through elevated mountain passes. Driving up or down elevations is hard on many vehicle components, including brakes, transmissions and engines (when gearing down). In addition, switchback mountain passes are hard on tires.

"In some cases the problem is the fact that the fleet manager isn't a fleet manager."

**DAVID M. BROADWATER JR.**  
MANAGER, FLEET MANAGEMENT SERVICES  
HOLMAN

Depending on how they are used, these trucks will often suffer from a variety of different wear and tear issues. Hickok offers two examples: A medium-duty box truck might be used to make deliveries all day, every day in a city environment where stop-and-go traffic is the norm. Stuck in these conditions, this truck will often need more brake service, and it may have more engine wear issues caused by the constant acceleration and deceleration that are common in a busy city environment.

On the other hand, a medium-duty service body truck that regularly operates in a more rural environment, and travels long distances on paved roads, with a heavy trailer in tow, and then has to go off-road to access certain job sites, is more likely to have to deal with transmission issues, Hickok explains.

Looking at the situation from a broader perspective, Hickok says that in general, medium-duty trucks are most like-

However, even trucks that spend most of their time in flat rural areas, where they normally travel longer distances and don't need to constantly slow down or stop, can still have brake issues, if they're always loaded to the legal limit, or beyond, with heavy cargo, Hickok says.

## Pushing the envelope

David M. Broadwater Jr., Manager, Fleet Management Services at Holman agrees that excessive wear and tear is often the result of someone pushing a vehicle to its limits.

"Fleets often have lighter-duty trucks that tend to be overloaded because someone doesn't want to jump the gap into a medium-duty truck," Broadwater explains, "and the same can be said about medium-duty vehicles. You have some units that can be subject to overloading and abuse, because the company may not be in a position to jump up



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Don't ask your medium-duty trucks to do the job of their heavy-duty counterparts.

weight classes into a heavier-duty truck, even though that's what they really need."

Broadwater notes that sometimes the reason why a medium-duty truck is used to do the job of a heavy-duty truck is because the person making that decision may not fully appreciate what's really needed to get the job done.

"In some cases, the problem is the fact that the fleet manager isn't a fleet manager," he says. "Instead they're an extension of procurement or accounting or HR, in some cases. Your old-school fleet managers who really understood the vehicles, the usage, the regulations are few and far in between."

Broadwater explains that in some cases, fleet managers are wearing too many hats. The work of actually managing a fleet may be secondary to their other roles within an organization.

This lack of focus, coupled with a lack of understanding, is further exacerbated by the fact that in some cases, the fleet manager who orders the trucks doesn't fully understand how those trucks are actually used on a day-to-day basis. The fleet manager may assume that the trucks are being used in a certain manner, but those who actually drive and use those trucks may be pushing that truck further than the fleet manager could imagine.

Another challenge is money. Budgets are set by an organization, and the fleet manager who is ordering the trucks may look at the pricing of various vehicles and conclude that he can get more trucks for the same money if he skimps on some of the specs.

"For the sake of the budget, they'll impact the overall performance out in the field, not necessarily taking into consideration what their operating budgets will look like at the end of the lifecycle," Broadwater adds.

### The right vendor

When it comes to maintaining medium-duty vehicles, Broadwater stresses the importance of working with a shop that understands what's required. "You want to align with the right vendor," he explains. "That's important, because depending on where you draw the line between light- and medium-duty, you could take your [Ford] F-450 to a light-duty shop, and they will be able to change your oil and do your brakes. But do they have the skillset to really identify some of these premature wear items, and other issues that need attention during a through PM? Probably not."

Broadwater says it's critical to work with a vendor who is familiar with medium-duty vehicles. "Do they have a shop that's big enough that you can actually drive your vehicle into the building?" he asks. "Do they have a hoist that can lift your vehicle, or are they doing you a favour by changing the oil out back, on their back, as opposed to getting your truck into the air so that they can do a proper inspection?"

The idea of working with the right vendor also applies to upfitting. Broadwater recalls working with a client who was dealing with suspension components that were failing prematurely. When Broadwater and his team looked at the problem, they realized that whoever the client hired to upfit their truck, didn't know what they were doing.

"The truck was not level," Broadwater says. "The crane, the toolbox and the air compressor were all mounted on one side of the vehicle, and that side of the vehicle was wearing out the brakes prematurely, going through ball joints, the leaf springs were cracking, it was a real mess. But that's what happens when you ask your buddy to mount some stuff on a chassis for you, rather than working with a reputable upfitter who understands the medium-duty world. You get what you pay for." [🔗](#)



## Tailored and Optimized

Chevrolet's line of medium duty HD U.S. chassis cabs fills a niche beyond your typical  $\frac{3}{4}$  and 1-ton trucks.

TEXT HUW EVANS

For commercial fleets looking at trucks beyond your typical  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton,  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton and 1-ton full-size pickups and chassis cabs, such as in the Class 4-6 categories and for specialized needs, including trans-border operations, one option that might be worth considering is Chevrolet's range of medium duty chassis cabs from the U.S.

Launched in 2018 as 2019 model year vehicles, these are essentially successors to the old Chevrolet Kodiak and GMC TopKick trucks (though it is noted that the 4500, 5500 and 6500 HD are only offered as Chevrolets and have no GMC equivalent).

### Maximum customization

From the outset, these medium-duty chassis cabs were designed to offer maximum customization, ensuring they can be easily tailored to specific fleet requirements. A key part of this was providing single piece frame rails from front to back. These are true single piece items with no rivets or welds, and feature a top surface that is flat and smooth, all the way to the tail. This was designed for ease of upfitting, ensuring that a

variety of bodies and configurations can be added with minimal fuss. The frames on these trucks are also fully painted from the factory to minimize corrosion, and the brake and fuel lines, as well as the fuel tank, are tucked up inside the frame to minimize the risk of damage.

Unlike the smaller Silverado HD, which offers both gasoline and diesel powerplants, the 4500, 5500 and 6500 come exclusively with diesel power, in this case the GM Duramax 6.6-litre turbodiesel V-8, rated at 350 horsepower and 750 lb-ft of torque. It's teamed

with a range of six-speed Allison automatic transmissions, a choice of 4x2 or 4x4 drivelines, and an available power take-off feature that enables the operating of various upfitting equipment, such as dump bodies or cranes.

### Functional and comfortable

From the outset, the goal was to make these trucks both functional and comfortable. Key features include a forward tilting clamshell hood that can be opened and closed with one hand, enabling easy engine access without having to resort to removing the grille or front bumper assembly, and/or climbing up on

"In order to address the needs of a wide range of fleet customers, Chevrolet offers these trucks with multiple options, including regular or crew cabs, plus five different overall length configurations."

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Flat frame rails maximize flexibility for upfitting use, for everything from stake beds to dump bodies.

ladders to get under the hood. This will allow fleets to save significant time when it comes to repairs and maintenance—a big bonus for many commercial operators. Sound ergonomics are a key part of the Silverado 4500/5500/6500 HD models, with good exterior visibility, aided by the sloping hood design, along with well laid out controls, and a driving position designed for comfort. Sound deadening is enhanced with triple sealing. Even though these are work trucks, they incorporate a range of modern convenience features. These include OnStar connectivity, as well as 4G LTE WiFi with hot spot capability, plus inductive cell phone charging, and Apple Car Play and Android Auto smart phone connectivity.

Adding to the comfort factor are optional air springs for the rear suspension, which serve as a supplement to the traditional leaf springs and dampers.

### Multiple options

In order to address the needs of a wide range of fleet customers, Chevrolet offers these trucks with multiple options, including regular or crew cabs, five different overall length configurations, wheelbases that range from 165 inches (4191 mm) to 243 inches (6172 mm), and cab-to-axle lengths that cover the gamut from 60 inches (1524 mm) up to 162 inches (4115 mm).

Other features designed for ease of operation include an easily-accessible battery box, and a Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF) fill unit. Located behind the right front fender, this enables the fluid to be quickly topped up, and prevents any mixing of fluids by accident.

Chevrolet 4500/5500/6500 HD models come with GM's StabiliTrak electronic stability control system, which includes

traction control, as well as Hill Start Assist and Electronic Trailer Sway Control. Operating range was a key consideration for these trucks, which feature a fuel tank capacity of up to 246-litres (65 U.S. gallons) to help operators go further between fill ups.

Gross Vehicle Weight Ratings (GVWR) on these trucks range from 14,001 to 16,500 lbs for the 4500 HD, through 17,500-19,500 lbs for the 5500 HD—up to 21,000 to 23,500 lbs for the heavier-duty 6500 HD.

While commercial fleet operators do have a range of choices from several vehicle manufacturers in the medium-duty Class 4 through Class 6 categories, the variety of configurations and extra features, such as optional air suspension, single piece frame rails and clamshell hood design, make the Chevrolet 4500/5500/6500 an interesting and worthy consideration within these vehicle segments. [O](#)

## Specifications

### 2025 Chevrolet Silverado 4500/5500/6500 HD

**Engine:**

6.6-litre GM Duramax (350 hp/750 lb-ft torque)

**Cab Configurations:**

Regular Cab, Crew Cab

**Maximum Gross Vehicle Weight Rating:**

16,500 lbs (4500 HD)

19,500 lbs (5500 HD)

23,500 lbs (6500 HD)



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Mack Trucks North America

## A New Look and Much More for the Mack Pioneer

Mack Trucks has just launched its brand-new long-haul truck, which promises significant fuel savings while incorporating the latest safety technologies and increased driver comfort.

TEXT CLAUDE BOUCHER

**A**s Mack Trucks celebrates their 125th anniversary, the company is unveiling their latest highway transport solution. The decision to launch the new Pioneer at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge in New York is significant—this historic district is where the first truck was built by the manufacturer, renowned for their bulldog emblem.

Eight years after the introduction of the Anthem, a tractor that distinguished itself with a unique hood and grille design, Mack presents their vision of trucking's future with a vehicle boasting an updated appearance, fully-redesigned cab, new powertrain options, and an array of technologies dedicated to enhancing driver comfort and safety.

"The Mack Pioneer represents our commitment to innovation and excellence in the long-haul segment," says Jonathan Randall, President of Mack Trucks North America. "This truck tells Mack's story: It's bold, iconic, solid, and timeless, embodying our DNA and character while guiding our customers into the future with an advanced design that prioritizes both the driver experience and operational efficiency." ➤

The Mack Pioneer is the brand's latest long-haul truck.

### Heritage and innovation

Unlike typical heavy truck model launches, which feature limited styling changes and technology upgrades, the Pioneer represents a more substantial transformation. Mack has successfully retained the brand's signature appearance with a distinctive grille and the iconic bulldog hood ornament, now nestled in a specially-designed recess at the hood's front edge. Beyond their functional role in improving engine cooling, the hood's top and side air intakes contribute significantly to the Pioneer's bold aesthetic.

"We've taken the iconic Mack bulldog and repositioned it more prominently on the hood," explains Lukas Yates, Senior Expert Designer at Mack Trucks, who designed the exterior of the Pioneer. "Rather than sitting on a pedestal, the bulldog hood ornament is now integrated into the truck's design, flanked by air intakes that manage airflow under the hood, making it an essential element of the truck's performance, rather than just an emblem."

The fenders, too, with a sharper and more robust style than what's found on the market, maintain that "badass" attitude that made Mack famous. Notably, the new headlights are now equipped with a hot-air defroster, replacing the unattractive integrated defrost lines.



The look remains distinctive and order books are now open for the Pioneer.

The Pioneer's cab is the largest ever offered by Mack, with nine additional inches of width, and an interior height of up to 99 inches, depending on the selected sleeper configuration. Design improvements include a more curved windshield; a contemporary side profile; minimal gaps



PHOTOS MACK TRUCK

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between the hood, bumper and cab components; and re-designed fairings.

The interior has undergone a complete transformation, featuring a modern dashboard with dual digital display screens, expanded seating choices, and an available FlexSuite option in the sleeper configuration—an innovative design incorporating a workstation and stowable bed. The quality of the interior finish far surpasses anything Mack has done previously. The truck also offers an advanced climate management system that maintains cabin temperature during extended idle periods, delivering unprecedented comfort for both work and rest. The Pioneer is available in a full range of configurations, either as a day cab tractor or with sleeper compartments of 44, 64, and 76 inches, in high-roof or raised-roof versions.

### Under the hood

Mack took advantage of the Pioneer launch to update their engine lineup. Even the nomenclature has changed, with the MP8 engine becoming the MP13, now reflecting the displacement (13 litres) rather than the truck class (Class 8).

The new engine, which features variable geometry turbo-charger technology, delivers a 3% improvement in fuel efficiency. When configured with the mirror-replacing camera system, which enhances aerodynamics, the Pioneer's optimized exterior design and upgraded powertrain components combine to deliver fuel savings of up to 11% over its predecessor, the Anthem.

### Technology and safety

The Pioneer features the latest technological advances from the Volvo Group, Mack's parent company. It integrates the brand-new MaxRide air suspension, which incorporates four airbags per axle instead of two. Additionally, making its first appearance in a Mack vehicle, the Command Steer active steering assistance technology utilizes a precision computer-controlled motor. This system serves dual purposes: It diminishes harmful road shock to reduce driver fatigue, while simultaneously enhancing stability during emergency situations, like front-tire blowouts.

Mack is also enhancing their active driver assistance systems, which combine braking, acceleration, and steering control in case of collision risks or unwanted lane changes. With the Pioneer's debut, the manufacturer introduces the all-new MyMack application, enabling drivers to remotely unlock doors, monitor vehicle status, and manage lighting and climate control systems via smartphone. Additionally, the Pioneer is the first in Mack's lineup to incorporate a camera-mirror system that partially substitutes traditional mirrors—an interim solution until North American regulatory bodies approve their complete replacement with camera and display technology, as already permitted in Europe.

### A common strategy

Mack is part of the vast Volvo Group network, which includes worldwide Volvo Construction Equipment, Volvo Penta engines, Prevost and Novabus buses and coaches, Renault trucks in Europe, and of course, Volvo trucks. The new Pioneer marks a change in Volvo Group's overall strategy in North America. While Mack and Volvo cabs were previously resolutely distinct, the Pioneer shares its highly-modernized cab with the new Volvo VNL and VNR. This shared architecture has streamlined the integration of advanced technologies into the Pioneer, which now incorporates numerous innovative safety and driver-assistance features from the Volvo lineup.

This deeper integration strategy is clearly tied to the ongoing competition for North American market share between Volvo Group's two truck brands. Currently positioned at 5th and 6th in Class 8 truck market rankings, Volvo and Mack are counting on their new long-haul tractors to strengthen their sales performance. Corporate leadership has established an ambitious target of reaching a 25% combined market share for both brands by 2030.

Orders are already open for the new Mack Pioneer. The manufacturer will continue to produce their previous long-haul tractor version, the Anthem, for the time being. More announcements are promised in the coming months. [🔗](#)

# Tracking Trailers

Do you know where all your fleet assets are?

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

**T**elematics has long allowed fleet professionals to track their assets, including everything from sedans and light-duty vehicles to Class 8 trucks, and everything in between.

When we think about the typical tractor-trailer setup, which would you say should be equipped with telematics: the tractor or the trailer? A growing number of fleet professionals would argue that both need to be monitored, especially if you want a complete picture of where all your assets are at all times, and whether they need your attention for one reason or another.

While tracking tractors makes sense for many reasons, “a growing number of fleets are investing in telematics for their trailers as well,” says Stacy Sadar, Senior Business Development Manager at Geotab. “Besides the location of each trailer, telematics is about optimizing efficiencies, improving safety, and protecting assets—not just the trailer, but the cargo that’s in it.”

Sadar argues that tracking trailers has become a must, especially in recent years, since theft of cargo is a growing concern. According to the most recent statistics, theft has risen by double-digits, year-over-year, “and the average loss has now risen to over \$200,000 per incident across North America,” Sadar adds.

Paul Washicko, General Manager of the Telematics Solutions Business Unit at CalAmp agrees that telematics is a must for trailers. “I think a majority of new trailers that are being delivered have GPS tracking devices that have been installed at the factory,” he adds.

## Optimizing efficiencies

Beyond theft prevention, telematics is helping fleets improve their operational efficiencies. “If you don’t know where your trailers are,” Sadar says, “you can’t utilize them.”

Knowing the location of each trailer benefits both drivers and customers, Sadar explains. From the driver’s perspective,



it’s a good way to find the trailer they’re supposed to be picking up. Customers, on the other hand, benefit because they can always find out where their trailer is, and how long it’s going to take for them to receive their cargo.

“This data is used by dispatch, reducing billing disputes, enhancing transparency, and telling customers where their products are,” Sadar adds.

According to Washicko, the larger the fleet, the bigger the need for tracking. “For a smaller fleet, it’s not such a big deal,” he explains. “If you have five trailers, you pretty much know where

each one is. Larger fleets have more of a challenge. They don’t always know where their trailers are, and if they need a particular trailer, it can be difficult to find [without GPS tracking].”

## Telematics—beyond location data

While trailer location data is key, fleet professionals can leverage the power of telematics to gather a lot more information about each of their trailers. “They can find out if the trailer doors were opened, they can see inside the trailer, if they decide to connect a camera, and they can monitor the health of each trailer,” Sadar explains.

“Another reason why you’d want to track your trailers is to prevent unauthorized usage,” Washicko adds.

Depending on the type of telematics and sensors employed, fleet managers can gather data about the condition of the tires or brakes. “That brings us to maintenance,” Washicko explains. “You might have a trailer equipped with an automatic tire inflation system (ATIS), and conclude that you’re good to go, but you also need to know if you have a leak in a tire, because the constant inflation and deflation wears the tire out.”

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In addition, telematics can alert the driver and fleet manager to any fault codes. "Brake fault codes are key because you need to know that everything is working properly," Washicko adds. "So getting information about any diagnostic trouble codes is important, and wear sensors are extremely valuable. Moreover, it's a good idea to monitor vibration and temperature to see if something is wrong."

### Hide your hardware

Like all telematics solutions, tracking a trailer requires the appropriate hardware, including sensors, and the software that can receive data and then translate it into actionable information.

Sadar says the hardware is easy to install, and that any fleet's in-house mechanics should be able to do so easily. To prevent any potential thieves from disabling the hardware that's connected to the trailer, Sadar says that it should be mounted out of sight so that it's hidden from view.

### Getting started

The benefits of tracking trailers with telematics is clear. Furthermore, the technology is proven, and it's been used for many years to track a variety of vehicles. Sadar recommends that fleet managers look at their needs, figure out what kind of data they want to collect, and then choose a telematics provider that's right for them.

"I would then do a pilot," she adds. "I would install them on a few vehicles and see how it goes from there. But until



To prevent thieves from disabling telematics hardware, like this asset tracker from Geotab, all hardware should be mounted out of sight and hidden from view.

you understand what you actually need, you can't do a pilot with it."

CalAmp's Washicko, on the other hand, doesn't think that a pilot project is always necessary, simply because the technology is proven, and the benefits are clear. "I think the technology is well understood, and fleet managers can talk to other fleets to see how they're taking advantage of it," he says.

That said, he does see why some fleets might want to dip their toes into the telematics pool before jumping in with both feet. "If they do want a pilot, it would be more about how they would use the technology, and how they're going to route that information within their organization," he says. "It wouldn't be a pilot about the efficacy of the service, because that's already been established." [O](#)

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## Canvec's Emergency Roadside Services

The hallmark of the Montreal-based company Canvec is their adaptability, offering diverse services to businesses requiring efficient heavy transport solutions.

TEXT MICHEL BEAUNOYER

**F**ounded in 1990, Canvec's primary mission was to rent all categories of semi-trailers to retail businesses, transport companies, and institutions. Today, it's clear that this family business has expanded their scope of operations and now offers fleet managers much more comprehensive support, particularly through their roadside assistance and maintenance service.

"Our company was first built to offer short- and long-term rentals of flatbed, dry, and refrigerated semi-trailers," explains Danny Lefebvre, President of the company. "But in 2017, we introduced a 24/7 emergency breakdown service across Quebec. This assistance isn't limited to our trailer rental clients—we support all heavy vehicles facing roadside issues, whatever the problem may be."

#### A service in high demand

The roadside service has actually become so successful that it now leads their operations and represents a key point of pride for the company. The popularity of this service has driven expansion across all of North America. While their own mobile units serve Quebec and Ontario directly, they maintain a network of handpicked partners to deliver service throughout the rest of the continent.

"Whether it's a Quebec driver with a flat tire along a highway in Arizona or an Ontario driver broken down in Quebec, we provide support in their preferred language as quickly as possible," Lefebvre explains. "On this front, there are no false promises. We tell the operator exactly how and when our help will be deployed."

Throughout Quebec and Ontario, their quick-response units travel highways, roads, and even country lanes in one of 35 Canvec-branded service vans. These include Mercedes Sprinter, GMC Savana, and Ford E-450 vans loaded with the tools and parts needed to respond to truckers' distress calls. Self-



sufficiency and maximizing space utilization are critical here, particularly to reduce vehicle weight. Moreover, worth noting is management's current assessment of a possible shift to electric vehicles, which represents a forward-looking approach to reducing emissions in their operations and for their client base.

These service vehicles are also used to provide necessary preventive maintenance for semi-trailers and trucks rented by clients. For example, if a trailer, immobilized for a few hours at a client's location within a 100-kilometre radius of Canvec's headquarters, requires light maintenance or a simple repair, a service unit can be sent to the trailer's location.

#### Efficient dispatch of units

"We have an outstanding dispatch service," says Lefebvre. "We want to ensure that our clients don't have any problems with our equipment, knowing the devastating effects of downtime on the profitability of their operations. Often, this maintenance and these repairs are carried out when the vehicle is stationary, without disrupting the driver's schedule."

An important detail is that all roadside service vans are customized and fully equipped by the technical teams at the company's garage. This is the same shop Lefebvre now aims to expand to support more extensive maintenance services. "The demand from clients wanting us to handle their heavy-truck maintenance is substantial, but qualified labour is scarce, and we barely have the resources to focus on the vehicles and semi-trailers in our rental programs."

#### Mobile phones and tablets

Canvec didn't wait for the recent digital boom—they modernized years ago. Paper-based transactions were eliminated approximately a decade back. Their current operations rely on the versatile combination of tablets and smartphones to maximize efficiency.



Service vans are fully equipped at Canvec's headquarters.

The company wants to go further by implementing, among other things, a geolocated communication tool that will tell the broken-down trucker the estimated time of arrival of the service unit. They will be able to track the assistance, just like tracking a package.

The emergency repair roadside service is accessible to all heavy-truck operators, whether they are clients or not. "If the trucker has an account with us, billing is automatic. If a stran-

ger calls us for help, we will definitely go, and the fees will be charged to their credit card," says Lefebvre. He points out that emergency roadside service frequently opens doors to new business. "When we're helping someone with aging equipment that's breaking down regularly, we can offer newer rental trucks or semi-trailers as an alternative solution," Lefebvre explains, referring to his company's integrated service model. [O](#)

## Common breakdowns

There's no doubt that Canvec's roadside technicians encounter a wide variety of situations. A review of their most common service calls reveals that many issues could have been prevented with thorough maintenance routines. Frequently occurring issues include problems with electric fuses, brake systems, frozen lines, turbochargers, alternators, electrical connectivity, air systems, suspension components, cooling systems, ABS modules, and wiper assemblies. Despite what many might assume, flat tires are comparatively rare occurrences.



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## Heavy Truck & Specialty Tire Focus



## Stop. Start. Twist. Turn. Repeat.

Don't skimp when shopping for waste and recycling truck tires because they're going to take a beating.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

Few tires could stand up to the kind of abuse that waste haul tires have to endure on a daily basis. Bridgestone sums up the matter nicely with these words: "Stop. Start. Twist. Turn. Then do it again and again, except each stop is a little different."

But wait! There's more. As James McIntyre, SVP Sales Canada / Product Development North America, Sailun Tire Americas explains, "Garbage and recycling truck operators face several challenges including tire wear and tear, punctures and damage, overloading, and uneven load distribution."

Gus Liotta, General Manager, Commercial Sales - Canada at Goodyear agrees. "Waste and recycling trucks experience some of the toughest operating conditions in the commercial trucking industry," he says.

"They face high-scrub environments that involve frequent stops, starts, and turns, often on surfaces littered with debris. The constant exposure to heavy loads and sharp objects increases the risk of punctures and accelerated tire wear."

If that weren't demanding enough, Liotta notes that conditions in Canada are even more demanding. "Canadian fleets must navigate harsh winter weather and challenging terrains,

further emphasizing the need for tires with enhanced durability, traction, and all-season performance," he adds.

#### Built tough

In order to endure all this abuse, waste and recycling tires have to be built tough. "We have to build these tires with extreme



#### Double Coin RR716

The Double Coin RR716 is an ultra-premium all position tire designed for the refusal/sanitation industries. It benefits from a dual compound with a heat-dissipating lower layer and scrub-resistant upper layer, and it has a durable casing with added sidewall protection to defend against curb/scrub damage and promote retreadability.

use in mind,” explains Mike Matesic, Product Segment Manager, TBR at Dynamic Tire. “We have to enhance the casings so that they handle all that twisting torque, lateral forces, the stop-and-go, and the constant change in the amount of weight each tire has to handle as heavy loads of garbage are hoisted into the truck.”

Tread patterns must also be optimized to handle all these stresses, Matesic adds. “If you look at tires that are used for long-haul applications, they have a consistent rib pattern, and strategic placement of tread blocks and siping,” he explains. “But if the waste and recycling tire has a similar, or a higher level of siping, it will tear, and if the outer tread block doesn’t have a robust shoulder with an enhanced casing, you’re going to get tread-lug cracking, to name just a few issues.”

These tires also have an enhanced load index, which allows them to handle all the weight they have to haul, Matesic notes, “and the tread patterns have to be able to handle all the twisting and turning that they’re exposed to.”

Also important, Matesic explains, is the fact that the casing on these tires has to be strong enough for retreading. “It’s a robust casing that can be retreaded without any issues,” he explains.

### No compromises

Just in case any fleet manager thinks that they can skimp on quality and purchase tires for their garbage or recycling trucks that aren’t tough enough to endure all these extremes, Matesic notes that this is simply not an option. These trucks operate on very tight schedules, their loads must be picked up on time, and dealing with a flat tire when they’re on the clock simply isn’t an option.

Robert Vetter, Vice President Sales Eastern Canada, Huayi Tire Canada/Double Coin agrees that compromise is not an option. “They need an application-specific tire that operates well in the conditions that they are working in,” he says. “High tread scrub and severe sidewall abrasions are normal conditions in this segment.”

So the next time you’re out shopping for waste haul tires for

your fleet of refuse vehicles, consider how much engineering had to go into the design and construction of these tires so that they can survive the demands placed upon them day in and day out, in all types of weather conditions and road surfaces. Designed to endure day-to-day extremes, waste haul tires truly are the unsung heroes of the garbage and recycling industry. These tires help waste and recycling fleets get the job done in some of the most extreme conditions any vehicle or fleet operator has to deal with. [O](#).

“We have to build these tires with extreme use in mind. It’s a robust casing that can be retreaded without any issues.”

MIKE MATESIC  
PRODUCT SEGMENT MANAGER, TBR  
DYNAMIC TIRE



#### Goodyear Endurance WHA

The Goodyear Endurance WHA tire is a flagship product in the waste and recycling segment, and features sidewall protector shingles to help resist scuffing, a steel belt and casing package for enhanced retreadability, and four wide circumferential grooves for all-season traction on wet, snow-covered and dry roads in stop/start waste haul truck applications.



#### Rovelo RDM3

Designed for highway and mixed road surfaces, the Rovelo RDM3 tire is engineered for high scrub mixed service applications with a cut/chip compound. The stabilized shoulder and tread block design provide resistance to scrub wear in operations with copious twisting and turning. The stone protectors at the base of the tread void aid in reducing stone damage.

# The Dual-Fuel Dilemma

Try before you buy, if you're thinking of converting your fleet to run on alternative fuels.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

In March of this year, in a joint press conference, KAG Canada and Innovative Fuel Systems (IFS) announced that KAG Canada had been testing a hydrogen dual-fuel-powered heavy-duty truck powered by IFS' patented Multi-Fuel Technology Platform (MFTP).

In addition, for more than three-and-a-half years, KAG Canada has been using this same MFTP system with natural gas, resulting in reduced emissions and an average fuel cost savings of 15%.

MFTP is a retrofit system that can be used on heavy-duty trucks to allow a diesel engine to offset diesel fuel usage by combining diesel fuel with a variety of cleaner burning fuels including compressed natural gas (CNG), renewable natural gas (RNG), and as noted above, even hydrogen.

## KAG's long history

What started as a small fleet based in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan in 1964, has grown exponentially over the past 60 years. Today, KAG Canada has roughly 1,200 power units and 2,700 specialized trailers, all of which are used to haul bulk commodities, says Chris Chapman, Vice President of Fleet Services at KAG Canada.

Like most companies, KAG is concerned with their carbon footprint and with the need to cut fuel consumption and costs. With that in mind, they've been experimenting with alternative fuels, which is how they got involved with the dual-fuel system from IFS.

"Right now we have six dual-fuel units, three in Eastern Canada and three in Western Canada," Chapman says. "The system we're using is a refit on existing diesel engines, so you still have diesel fuel and you're still using a diesel engine. You just add an extra tank for natural gas."

"The last thing you want is to convert your fleet to 100% natural gas or hydrogen and then find out that this technology isn't going anywhere."

CHRIS CHAPMAN  
VICE PRESIDENT OF FLEET SERVICES  
KAG CANADA

When it comes to the actual modification of the truck, Chapman says that fleet managers can choose to either take one of the existing diesel fuel tanks off a truck and replace it with a tank for natural gas, or they can opt to keep both diesel tanks on the truck, and add a natural gas tank to the back of the cab.

## Getting started

KAG's experiment with natural gas started in 2021. "We initially had five trucks, and then we added another," Chapman recalls. IFS sup-

plies KAG with kits that are fitted onto each truck, and Chapman says that he has more of these on order as he looks forward to equipping more trucks with this dual-fuel capability.

"We've done the pilot project and we have proven that the technology works," he says. "We've also proven that we will see savings and that it makes sense from a total cost of ownership perspective."

Moreover, Chapman notes that investing in this technology makes sense whether or not a fleet has government support. With government support he's seeing a payback in about two



(L-R) Chris Chapman, Vice President of Fleet Services at KAG Canada; Leland Oberst, President and CEO of IFS; Brian Jean, Minister of Energy and Minerals of the Canadian province of Alberta



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to three year, and without government support, it's about five or six years.

"We keep our trucks for about five or six years, and then we turn them over," he adds. "So that works out well because these kits can be taken off the trucks, if we want to sell them, and we can then install these kits on the next batch of trucks. Since we already paid for the kits, it's all 100% savings on the next batch of trucks."

### Carbon footprint vs. reality

While Chapman admits that one of the goals KAG had in mind when investing in this technology was the company's carbon footprint, he notes that you can't always press ahead with greener technologies without considering all the factors.

"While your carbon footprint is top of mind," he explains, "you need to figure out a way to reduce it without sacrificing payload and reliability. The last thing you want is to convert your fleet to 100% natural gas or hydrogen and then find out that this technology isn't going anywhere. In the end, you have a fleet of trucks you can't use anymore."

KAG started out with dual-fuel applications mixing diesel fuel with CNG. That's been successful, and in place for a number of years. Mixing diesel with hydrogen, however, is another matter.

"We started the hydrogen trial last November, and it lasted until this March," Chapman says. "We wanted to see how it would compare with natural gas, and to see if it would be practical, and if it could work for us."

Although the trial went well, and Chapman notes that the technology works as advertised, in the end, KAG decided that it wasn't the right dual-fuel approach for them, at least not for now.

"The hydrogen itself is very expensive," Chapman admits. "It's four or five times the price of natural gas. It would take a while to see the return on investment."

Both the CNG- and the hydrogen-powered trucks performed very well, Chapman adds, and the payload was comparable. "They both performed like a commercial truck should," he adds. "The issue was the lack of hydrogen infrastructure and the fact that an engineer had to fuel up the trucks because the drivers weren't allowed to do it themselves."

Practicality was a huge issue since hydrogen fuelling stations are very rare. In contrast, Chapman says, the natural gas infrastructure is much better and drivers can fill up the tanks themselves.

### Ease of use

When it comes to mixing diesel with natural gas, the process couldn't be easier. Once the dual-fuel kits are installed, all the drivers need to do is fuel up. They never need to flip a switch, and they never notice a difference in the way the trucks perform.

"Drivers get special training on how to fuel up with CNG, otherwise it's like a normal truck," Chapman explains. "It starts like a normal truck, it drives like a normal truck, the horsepower is the same, and it even sounds the same when the engine is running."

The only thing drivers need to keep in mind is that they must remember to fuel up properly. "You have to fill these trucks with diesel and with natural gas," Chapman explains. "If you run out of diesel, the truck quits. It will not run on natural gas alone. But if you run out of natural gas, you can still run on diesel."

Chapman stresses that this is not a 100% natural gas engine. "It is a diesel engine with natural gas injected into it," he says. In other words, the diesel is mixed with the natural gas inside each cylinder, which in turn cuts down on the amount of diesel fuel required.

### The bigger picture

When it comes to reducing the size of their carbon footprint,



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Brian Jean, Minister of Energy and Minerals of the Canadian province of Alberta spoke at the joint press conference hosted by KAG Canada and Innovative Fuel Systems.

Chapman says that he has a number of projects in the works. Adding more of these dual-fuel kits to a truck costs anywhere from \$60-\$80k, he says, but it's well worth the investment. "We've got a few natural gas kits on order," he adds, "so we're definitely going to continue doing that."

In addition, Chapman is considering other sources of diesel fuel. "We're going to partner with oil companies that have

developed low-carbon diesel fuel," he says. "Combining low-carbon diesel fuel with CNG should be an interesting mix."

He's also investing in ways to reduce idling, improve aerodynamics, and improve rolling resistance with SmartWay verified tires. "These are all part of our larger ESG initiative," Chapman concludes, "and we're proud of all the steps we're taking." 



Currently, KAG Canada has six dual-fuel trucks on their fleet, with more on the way.



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