

# Fleet & Mobility

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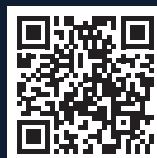
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# Who Said 2025 Would Be Easy?

From tariffs to wars—what's a fleet manager to do?

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

Just when you thought that the only thing we'd all have to worry about in 2025 is tariffs and how they would impact the fleet industry, war breaks out in Iran. I'm writing this hours after Iran retaliated for the bombing of their nuclear facilities by the United States.

Earlier in the day, global oil prices jumped, as did the prices at the pumps at the gas station down the street from me. Now, hours later, Reuters is reporting that, "Oil prices slipped more than \$3, or 4%... after Iran attacked the U.S. military base in Qatar in retaliation for U.S. attacks on its nuclear facilities, and took no action to disrupt oil and gas tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz."

You won't be surprised to learn that the aforementioned gas station hasn't dropped their prices as quickly as they increased them. It seems that prices go up quickly when global oil prices spike, but they always seem to take their time coming down.

Unfortunately, this isn't new. In fact, it's a reality that both consumers and fleets have had to come to terms with over the years. So if you're frustrated by the ups and downs of fuel prices, and you feel as though you're at the mercy of geopolitical situations, you're not alone.

## Impetus for change

While none of us can control what the local gas station charges for fuel, or how global conflicts will impact prices, recent events give fleet professionals even more impetus to focus on the costs that they can control. For instance, if you haven't already done so, consider implementing policies that promote fuel-efficient driving and reduce idling. And if you haven't already leveraged the power of modern telematics and artificial intelligence to optimize routes and reduce fuel consumption, that's something else you can control.

Furthermore, if your drivers aren't abiding by preventive maintenance schedules, then maybe it's time to crack down. Doing so not only prevents costly breakdowns, but also keeps vehicles running efficiently, without burning excess fuel.

Finally, consider your organization's electrification goals. While electric or electrified vehicles aren't practical for all fleet applications, wherever appropriate they could help slash fuel costs and limit your fleet's exposure to the ups and downs of global oil markets, as well as the geopolitical issues that affect them. And let's hope that 2025 has no more surprises for us. [🔗](#)

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# Holman



Holman

# Global Footprint; Canadian Legacy

With offices and staff throughout our great nation, Holman continues to cater to the needs of Canadian fleet professionals.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

**A**fter more than a century of growth and innovation, Holman continues to drive the future of fleet management. What started as a single Ford dealership, founded by Steward C. Holman in 1924, has blossomed into a global organization and an automotive service leader with many specialties, including fleet.

Through 100 years of growth and success, Holman remains family owned. As such, Holman can make strategic plans for the future with a focus on what's best for the business and their customers, without having to wonder how those decisions will be received by shareholders.

"Among the many benefits of being a family-owned, privately-held company is that we're not tied to market performance or the 13-week analyst's cycle," explains Brent Scowen, Managing Director, Canada at Holman. "I've spent most of my career working in publicly-traded companies and it's a different experience. You're literally making decisions at quarter-end, anticipating how the markets, the analysts and the share prices are all going to react."

As Holman CEO Chris Conroy says, "We're planning for the next quarter century; not just the next quarter." [>](#)

Part of Holman's Canadian senior leadership team:  
(L-R) Kathryn Foster, Brent Scowen, Romy Bria.

Without those pressures, Scowen adds, “when we talk about the business, our aspirations and our investments, they’re all seen with a much longer-term outlook and always with our customers in mind. We’re not forced to pivot from our best plans, our best thinking or our best strategies in order to respond to market expectations. We have benefited from this, and so have our clients.”

## Canadian presence

Here in Canada, Holman has been a fleet industry mainstay for nearly four decades. The organization has helped countless fleet professionals navigate economic ups and downs, endure multiple recessions, overcome supply chain struggles, and even weather a global pandemic.

Today, as Canadian fleet professionals continue to juggle budget demands, vehicle shortages, and tariff woes, Holman’s Canadian team is ready to help their customers navigate these challenges.

“When you consider today’s marketplace with all the complexities, along with all the geopolitical and economic challenges, we continue to be uniquely positioned here in Canada to service our clients and care for their drivers,” says Scowen.

While Holman has an extensive global footprint, the company has long-standing Canadian roots and proudly calls Canada among its corporate homes, providing services and solutions tailored to the precise needs of its in-country customers.

“We have a Canadian national headquarters in Mississauga; two additional offices in Laval and Calgary; we have a Canadian executive team that’s responsible for running our Canadian operation; we have close to 350 in-country staff from coast-to-coast with expertise in all the disciplines; we have three remarketing centres; and an assembly plant in Mississauga,” Scowen says.

Today, Holman’s Canadian team manages more than a quarter million vehicles for nearly 700 clients. “We’re especially proud of the fact that our entire portfolio of leased assets, from passenger vehicles to work trucks and beyond, is financed by Canadian financial institutions,” Scowen adds.

Eager to give back to the local community, Holman is also a proud supporter of several non-profit organizations throughout the region. “We think it’s important to do so,” Scowen says, “so whether it’s with local associations or the United Way of

“We continue to be uniquely positioned here in Canada to service our clients and care for their drivers.”

**BRENT SCOWEN**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, CANADA, HOLMAN



Canada, we’re committed to making a positive impact and giving back to communities across the country.”

## Relationships matter

Holman’s global headquarters is located in New Jersey, and according to Kathryn Foster, Director, North American Strategic Services at Holman that’s a strength that the Canadian team continues to leverage.

“Our Canadian partners [employees] and customers benefit from the technologies, innovations, and investments made across our entire organization,” she says. “However, when it comes to our Canadian customers, we know that relationships matter, and that’s why our Canadian presence is so vital.”

Foster says that Holman recognizes and understands the unique challenges many Canadian fleet operators are facing today. “We’re hearing from our clients that many of their industries are experiencing huge growth, while others are more cautious and more prudent with their planning,” she says. “Our ability to help them manage all these pressures is built on a blend of fleet expertise and unique knowledge of regional nuances. We have people on the ground locally, across Canada, and that really helps.”

“We’re planning for the next quarter century; not just the next quarter.”

**CHRIS CONROY** CEO, HOLMAN



Part of Holman's Calgary team.

### National presence, local support

Romy Bria, Vice President, Client Services at Holman agrees wholeheartedly. “In addition to the physical offices we have in key cities across Canada,” he says, “we have employees in every major market, including Ottawa, Edmonton, and Vancouver. That’s one of the biggest benefits we offer our clients—they can count on local support backed by with a deep understanding of the region and unique market dynamics.”

Bria highlights that Holman’s regional representatives help the broader team stay attuned to local regulations, weather conditions, and the operational challenges each part of the country has to face.

“Understanding what Highway 2 looks like during a winter drive from Calgary to Edmonton, is important,” he adds. “Whether it’s providing bilingual support in Quebec, navigating emissions regulations in B.C., or simply knowing what’s happening with the local hockey team, these details help us deliver better service and build stronger relationships with our customers.”

With team members across the country, Bria explains, Holman offers more than just geographic reach; it means quicker response times, reduced downtime, and a real human connection in every time zone.

“We can tailor the strategy based on the local knowledge of the fleet and the field,” he adds. “With strong regional sales, client relations, and operational teams, we ensure our

customers have convenient access to local individuals and reliable support.”

### Working with vendors

While Holman’s customers certainly benefit from their national presence, so do Holman’s suppliers. Moreover, Holman’s team can work with suppliers across Canada in order to provide fleet customers with the solutions they need.

“For our fleet customers, the ability to leverage the expertise of our entire fleet team—including our Canadian upfitting expertise—allows us to provide valuable insight and support,” Bria explains. “It allows us to apply a centralized strategy with regional execution, ensures our service is consistent, and that we’re not sacrificing flexibility to meet local needs.”

### Changing times, changing needs

While Holman may be over 100 years old, they continue to evolve. “As an organization, we recognize that what may have worked before, will not be the exact solution for tomorrow,” explains Foster. “Our clients’ needs are changing, the industry is changing, and we continue to adjust in order to meet these expectations and continue to offer the level of service and support that our customers have come to expect from us.”

Despite these external changes, the company continues to focus on delivering what has come to be known as, “The Holman Experience.” Foster explains: “This is our north star that guides our level of service. We want to continue to be easy to work with, and to work for. We want to continue to deliver on the expertise our customers engage us for, and we want to continue to foster strong relationships built on trust and confidence. That’s the purpose behind everything that we do.”

Holman is leveraging advanced technologies, including telematics solutions, data analytics tools, and EV integration platforms to help Canadian fleet professionals operate more efficiently, make smarter decisions, and adapt to evolving industry demands.

“Ultimately, we are positioning our clients to leverage their fleets as a revenue-generating tool,” Foster concludes. “In the end, that’s what effective fleet management is all about.”

From their roots as a single dealership, to becoming a global fleet management leader, Holman’s century of success is built on strategic, long-term planning, local expertise, and enduring customer relationships. In Canada, their national infrastructure and regional insight ensure clients get the right support, no matter the challenge. [🕒](#)

# Choice and Flexibility

OEM Panel discussion at NAFA I&E 2025 emphasized the need for different powertrain options, and adaptability to fleet customer and market requirements.

TEXT HUW EVANS

One of the most popular sessions at NAFA I&E is the OEM Panel, and at the 2025 event in Long Beach, California, this was no exception. The discussion, which took place on the 100th day of President Donald Trump's second term in office, covered a variety of topics that are currently front-and-centre among many fleets and fleet managers.

Moderated by Chris Brown, Associate Publisher of *Automotive Fleet* the panel featured Gabriel Slack, Sales Enablement Manager, GM Enolve; Eric Swanson, Vice President, Commercial Sales, East Region, Stellantis; and Greg Wood, Commercial & Government Sales General Manager, Ford Pro.

## Tariff talk

Kicking things off, the panelists dove into one of the key topics that has shaped the first half of 2025, namely tariffs initiated by the Trump Administration on products imported into the U.S.

As Swanson noted, the so-called "Stackable Tariffs," have and continue to be a very fluid situation, one that makes it very difficult for many businesses to make predictions and plan accordingly.

Swanson noted that for OEMs and their fleet operations, like many businesses, 95% of market factors are beyond their control. However, it's the 5% they can control that can make all the difference, especially over the longer term. "Communicate and work with your customers," he said. "Find out what they need, and utilize your teams, wherever they are located, to work with them."

Slack said that risk mitigation, particularly around issues such as logistics, gained new importance for OEMs and suppliers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and today, being able to adapt and pivot quickly is a huge advantage in what is a volatile and unpredictable operating environment.

Swanson noted that in addition to adapting and fitting into the marketplace, being competitive in the fleet industry also



OEM Panel Discussion at NAFA I&E 2025 (L-R): Chris Brown, Gabriel Slack, Eric Swanson and Greg Wood.

drives innovation and helps individual businesses, customers and the sector grow collectively.

## Changing regulations

Regarding ever-changing regulatory requirements, particularly as they relate to fuel economy standards and emissions, the only constant is change. That said, Wood noted that it's important to give customers choice, and that's one reason why Ford Pro has and will continue to offer a variety of powertrains, from gasoline, to diesel, to hybrid, plug-in-hybrid and pure battery electric. This ensures Ford can meet the requirements of a variety of customers.

Given that fuel economy and emissions standards are currently in turmoil (with the Trump Administration rolling back aggressive EV targets, and battling states like California, which have laid out regulations and timeframes for large-scale zero emissions vehicle adoption), it's important for fleets to have a plan and a direction for their objectives. In other words, work with commercial planners, have a clear plan, a general direction and an open and honest discussion.

## Leveraging associations

Slack said that in times like these, it's important to leverage the power and expertise of organizations like NAFA. He noted that while there is a chance that regulatory requirements will ease over the next few years, engaging with associations, with politicians, and regulators is key to ensuring your voice gets heard, and that one-size-fits-all regulations aren't forced upon the industry.

Another hot topic in today's fleet industry concerns vehicle procurement. The COVID-19 pandemic witnessed significant vehicle shortages, fueled by idle assembly plants and supply



chain disruptions. When vehicles could be manufactured and sold, retail customers were prioritized, which meant that many fleets saw their orders essentially dry up with no idea when order banks would reopen.

In 2025, the situation has improved. Slack noted that General Motors was among the first to go back to open ordering for fleet vehicles, but he added that for fleet managers, because the situation is constantly changing and because we still don't know what the full impact of tariffs will be, it is critical to get fleet orders in quickly so that organizations aren't stuck if order banks need to close again.

### More balanced

Wood said that while allocations were necessary for some OEMs during the COVID-19 era, it wasn't something they liked doing. "It added expense and complexity on our side," Wood explained. "Now that that's behind us, things have balanced out again."

He noted that today, Ford Pro has an Accreditation Program (Ford Pro Upfitter/FPU). This allows the sharing of data between Ford Pro and accredited upfitters, showing customers where the vehicle goes when it has left the assembly plant, so they can better plan for how long the upfit will take, and when the vehicle will be delivered and ready for use.

Brown asked the panelists about fleet electrification and their strategies when it comes to EV adoption. The consensus was, that providing customers with a variety of different options is essential to success going forward.

Slack said that in GM's case, some electric models, such as the Chevrolet Equinox EV and Chevy Silverado/

GMC Sierra in both EV and internal combustion engine forms, have been popular with fleet customers, and that there are advantages to running EVs in terms of service and maintenance. The key for OEMs is having a fresh and relevant portfolio of vehicles going forward.

### Another powertrain option

Swanson looked at electrification as simply another powertrain option and an industry trend following the footsteps of others, such as vehicle downsizing in the 1970s, where market requirements and business needs drove adoption of smaller and better-packaged vehicles.

Wood noted that technology advancements will continue to support each of the powertrain options available, whether it's ICE, hybrid, PHEV or full-electric, and he added that in some fleet vehicles, such as the Ford Explorer-based Police Interceptor, the hybrid powertrain option has enabled dramatic fuel, maintenance and total cost of ownership savings, given the amount of time police vehicles have traditionally had to spend idling when in use.

### Full range of services

Wood mentioned that since Ford Pro was established as a separate business unit of the Ford Motor Company, it has focused on providing software, charging infrastructure, financing of fleet vehicles and related services. He talked about how today, OEMs' professional fleet operations are essentially an entire package that's built around the vehicle, giving customers the opportunity

to operate their fleets at levels of efficiency that simply weren't possible before.

A good example is the mobile service that OEM fleet professional divisions now offer their customers.

Slack talked about the mobile service that's available for Chevrolet BrightDrop electric vans, which, when combined with concepts like parts availability and service scheduling (all enabled via vehicle connectivity), can help fleets minimize downtime and get their units back on the road as quickly as possible.

Wood talked about the fact that mobile service is flexible, which means it's available after hours so that repairs and maintenance can be performed when the customer needs them done, regardless of the hour or day. [🔗](#)

The consensus was that providing customers with a variety of different options is essential to success going forward.



2025 Ford Maverick

## More Relevant Than Ever

Ford has been building compact pickups for consumers and business owners for 100 years. It all started in 1925 with the very first pickup version of the Model T.

TEXT DANIEL RUFIANGE

**T**he compact Maverick pickup was introduced by Ford as a 2022 model. This year, it is receiving its first refresh, one that addresses key feedback from the initial launch. Most notably, the hybrid powertrain can now be paired with all-wheel drive. Better late than never, and now it's finally available.

It's a compelling choice for those who want a fuel-efficient pickup that can also handle adverse weather conditions. Ford's decision will likely appeal to many businesses looking to reduce fuel costs while meeting their operational needs.

And yes, the hybrid version of the Ford Maverick can deliver significant fuel savings. It uses a 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine paired with an electric motor. In city driving, this setup consumes just 5.4 L/100 km. With all-wheel drive, that figure rises slightly to 5.6 L/100 km. In combined driving, it remains easy to stay under the 6.0 L/100 km mark.

### The best option for your fleet

The 2025 Ford Maverick comes in XL, XLT, Lariat, Lobo and Tremor trims. The last two are less relevant for business use, as they are designed for specific purposes: performance in the case of the Lobo, and off-road driving for the Tremor. That leaves the first three trims, priced at \$36,795, \$39,295 and \$48,795 respectively, which includes \$2,195 in delivery and prep fees. The best value is clearly found toward the lower end of the lineup.

Helen Jackson, General Manager of Ford Pro, the commercial division of Ford Canada, confirms that this is where most of the interest from businesses is. "While commercial needs vary, the most popular version of the Ford Maverick for fleets is the front-wheel drive hybrid. However, we are already seeing growing demand for the new all-wheel drive hybrid. Of course, the



Despite its smaller cargo bed, 4x8 plywood sheets can lie flat across the wheel arches. The tailgate can be positioned to keep them perfectly level. The Maverick offers a payload capacity of 1,500 pounds and a towing capacity of up to 4,000 pounds.

Maverick is also available with a 2.0-litre EcoBoost four-cylinder engine for applications that require more power.”

### The same Maverick, but...

Some automakers reduce equipment levels on vehicles intended for fleet use. That’s not the case with the Maverick. The

### How Canadian businesses are responding

Ford estimates that fleet sales account for about five to 10 percent of Maverick purchases. Many companies across Canada have already added the Maverick to their operations. One of the country’s largest telecom providers is currently using the Maverick for their field technicians, Jackson notes.

Ford estimates that fleet sales account for about five to 10 percent of Maverick purchases. Many companies across Canada have already added the Maverick to their operations.

trims recommended for fleet customers are the same ones available for the general public. However, Jackson makes an important distinction. While the base version of the Ford Maverick (front-wheel drive hybrid XL) remains the same, there are specific options offered exclusively to fleet customers. For example, XL and XLT versions can be ordered with an optional eight-way power driver’s seat for fleet customers.

If the available options differ, does that mean fleet customers need to go through a separate purchasing process? Not at all. Jackson explains that all Ford vehicles are sold through the company’s dealer network, which includes 430 locations nationwide. Smaller businesses can work directly with their preferred dealership, or with a commercial account manager at one of Ford Pro’s commercial vehicle centres. For larger fleets operating across Canada, customers typically deal with a national Ford Pro account manager who coordinates with the dealership of their choice.

While she doesn’t name the company, Bell Canada seems likely, given how many Mavericks have been seen bearing the company’s branding. The potential cost savings are considerable for a company of that size switching from older Econoline vans to fuel-efficient Mavericks. At this telecom firm, Ford reports particularly high demand for the all-wheel drive hybrid version, which is no surprise.

### Clear advantages

In addition to its hybrid powertrain, the Maverick stands out for its versatility, especially given its compact footprint. Despite its five-foot bed, the rear section can be reconfigured to carry longer items, or secured to protect valuable equipment. One of the Maverick’s key advantages is that it’s designed to suit businesses of all sizes, whether you’re in home renovation, landscaping, or skilled trades, like electrical and plumbing. It’s >



Inside, the layout remains fairly simple, but now features a larger 13.2-inch multimedia screen, which replaces the previous 8.0-inch unit.

also useful for larger fleets that need a truck with just the right footprint, Jackson adds. What fleet buyers appreciate most, she says, is its fuel efficiency. Thanks to competitive pricing, the Maverick also offers lower long-term operating costs, which makes it a smart investment for business owners.

### Behind the wheel

For professionals who spend most of their day on the road, the Ford Maverick has a lot to offer. Sharing its platform with the Escape SUV, it delivers a smooth, comfort-focused ride. The



A wide range of accessories can be added to the cargo bed, such as these rails that extend the loading surface and keep materials more secure.

chassis feels solid and the handling is reassuring. For 2025, all Maverick trims come standard with Ford's Sync 4 multimedia system, which now includes additional features, and operates on a much larger 13.2-inch touchscreen, which replaces the previous 8.0-inch display.

The Maverick's advantages are hard to ignore. Its size makes it an ideal option for many small businesses. The hybrid powertrain offers substantial fuel savings. And now that all-wheel drive is available with the hybrid model, this truck is more relevant than ever. [🔗](#)



In the XL version, the Maverick keeps things simple, and yes, it comes with steel wheels.

# Think Big; Start Small

The big rigs are going electric...  
in a measured way.

TEXT CHRIS HILL

I listened to a panel discussion on heavy-truck electrification at the EV and Charging Expo in Toronto in May this year. The speakers made a strong case for the reality of electric drive in Class 8 transport. This was evident, as well, in the presence of a Volvo electric truck in the exhibit area, tricked out in Home Hardware colours and logos.

## Charging infrastructure

The speakers were keen to put the emphasis on charging infrastructure being in place first. One example of this is the Interstate 10 highway corridor in California, which will be in operation by 2027. The other is in Canada, linking Ontario and Quebec. Both have electric trucks running trials with the goal of achieving parity with the service offered by diesel-powered rigs.

There are three elements that need to work together seamlessly to make electric freight transportation work. The first is the vehicle, which today needs government incentives to close the gap with diesel on total cost of ownership. Canada's Medium and Heavy Duty Zero Emission Vehicle program has been able to bridge some of the price difference, as has Quebec's incentive program, Écocamionnage.

The second is the energy provider and the service they offer. Transport operators need shorter charging times on the road. This requires charging stations that can offer MCS (megawatt charging standard). This isn't easy. A retail shopping mall uses four to five megawatts of power per day. A truck charging station will need the same amount, or higher. The reality is this costs a lot. Power providers are experimenting with solid state transformers to increase capacity.

Data is the third element. This builds confidence in the transition away from diesel. Truck owners and shippers should not have to think about where and when to charge. They should trust that their delivery cost won't be higher with an electric truck.

## Short-haul applications


The obvious application for heavy duty electric trucks for



Volvo Class 8 electric drive tractor  
in Home Hardware livery on display at the EV  
and Charging Expo in May, 2025 in Toronto.

now is in short haul, return to base transportation. A shipper may have two or three deliveries within a 150-kilometre driving range per day, which is feasible with an electric truck. Hauling watermelons or farm tractors from the western U.S. to eastern Canada isn't the right application for electric trucks right now. Oil will always have a place in transportation, while electric trucks, that can go farther between charging stops, are developed.

It was worth noting that this panel did not suggest that hydrogen fuel cells were the answer. The case for hydrogen continues to find few believers. Fuel cells for transportation have been tested for decades and have not come down in price. No meaningful fuel, manufacturing, distribution or dispensing infrastructure has been built. The transit bus community, the leading market for heavy electric vehicles has committed to battery-electric drive.

The panel agreed that the technology is here for freight to be moved by battery-electric vehicles. Partnerships are needed, especially between truck owners and charging providers. The message is to think big, start small and do it right. 



Chris Hill is Program Manager, Fleet Planning for the City of Guelph as well as twice serving as Chair of NAFA's Ontario Chapter.

# All-Season vs. All-Weather vs. Winter Tires

When are all-weather tires the best option for your fleet?

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

Choosing the right type of tires for your fleet used to be pretty straightforward. In some parts of Canada, all-season tires were the best option, while in other parts, all-season tires were fine for the warmer months, but winter tires were a must when temperatures dropped.

A few years ago, however, a new category of tires came to market, offering fleets a third option. Known as “all-weather” tires, they offer the best of both worlds. They work well in the warmer months, and since they have a 3-Peak-Mountain-Snowflake (3PMS) logo on the sidewall, they’re perfectly fine in winter weather too.

All-weather tires are what all-season tires promised to be—tires you can actually use all year. Essentially, they’re all-season tires with the added benefit of 3PMS certification.

“All-weather tires have the 3PMS logo on them, so they offer way better traction in the winter than regular all-season tires,” explains Ugo Desgreniers, Director of Product Strategy for Stox Distribution.

So at first glance, all-weather tires sound like the best possible option. After all, why would you invest in two sets of tires for all your fleet vehicles, when you can get away with just one set that stays on all year round? The answer is simple: compromise.

## The all-weather compromise

Since they’re designed to handle temperature extremes, as well as everything from dry pavement to icy roads and snow, all-weather tires are a compromise. They’re not as good in the summer as a dedicated summer tire, and they’re not as good on snow and ice as a dedicated winter tire.

“All-weather products are fantastic, but they are not a replacement for dedicated winter products,” says Ian McKenney, Senior Product Manager at Bridgestone. “So if you’re going to be dealing with extended winter conditions, or heavy snow, and especially ice, winter products are still the gold standard.”



The Remedy WRG5 from Nokian Tyres is one of a number of all-weather tires designed to be used year-round.

Even so, for many fleets all-weather tires are a compromise they’re willing to make. Not having to buy two sets of tires, or swap out tires twice a year, nor pay for storage is a plus for some fleet managers.

## Growing in popularity

Stox Distribution’s Desgreniers says he’s seeing a big uptick in the popularity of all-weather tires. “All-weather tires are very popular in all the provinces, except Quebec,” he says. “People used to buy regular all-season tires in the past, but now they have all-weather tires as an option, and they’re available from most brands. The all-weather segment is growing really fast right now.”

As for Quebec drivers, Desgreniers explains that they don’t want to compromise when it comes to winter safety. “All drivers in Quebec have already used winter tires, mainly due to the law requiring them during the winter season,” he adds. “These same drivers continue to prioritize purchasing true winter tires to ensure the best possible safety in winter conditions—as opposed to all-weather tires, which offer lower performance in harsh winter conditions.”

That’s a fair point that fleet professionals need to keep in mind when looking at options for the vehicles they manage. In parts of Canada where winters are mild, all-weather tires may



“They offer way better traction in the winter than regular all-season tires.”

**UGO DESGRENIERS**  
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT STRATEGY,  
STOX DISTRIBUTION

be an acceptable compromise. However, in Quebec, or in the northern parts of any of the provinces where ice and snow are a major concern, the added traction of dedicated winter tires is a big plus.

### Greater availability

When all-weather tires debuted on the market years ago, they were available in limited sizes and they offered limited performance. Desgreniers says much has changed, and all-weather tires are now available for pretty much all vehicles on the road today. Moreover, they come in a range of prices, which is key for fleet managers working with a budget.

The good news, Desgreniers says, is that you don't have to spend a lot to get a decent all-weather tire. However, some lower-priced options can be more noisy and they can wear out a bit faster. “But if you buy premium all-weather tires, you'll get the same mileage that you would from an all-season tire,” he adds, “but with better traction on snow and ice.”

### Do the math

For some fleet managers, the choice between a single set of all-weather tires vs. a set of dedicated winter tires, plus a set of all-season tires for the warmer months, will come down to a math question.

Each fleet manager has to ask themselves: Is it more economical to invest in all-weather tires that we'll have to replace in two or three years, for example (depending on the distances your vehicles travel per year), or does it make more sense to buy a set of winter tires that we use half the year, plus a set of all-season tires that we use the other half, and we won't have to replace them at all because we're planning to remarket our vehicles in the next four or five years?

So, in the end, although all-weather tires are a great option, there's much to consider before jumping on the all-weather bandwagon.

Keep in mind that this new breed of tires is a compromise. While they may be perfectly adequate during the warmer months, if your fleet has to tackle serious winter conditions during the colder months, then you're still safer with a set of dedicated winter tires.

As James McIntyre, SVP Sales Canada / Product Development North America at Sailun Tire Americas explains, “All-weather tires are doing well in urban markets where space is difficult to find to store an extra set of tires, and where either the weather is not bad, or the commute is short,” he says. “Anyone who has commuted any distance on the 400-series of highways in Ontario knows they would rather have a dedicated winter tire. [O](#)”

# It's Not Personal; It's Business

Company car privileges require forethought and planning.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

**F**or many employees, a company car is a major perk. However, a company car program is not without its challenges. As Liz Klein, Director of Mid-Market & Commercial Sales – Canada at Samsara explains, “Many fleet operators support take-home vehicle programs as a benefit to employees, but doing so responsibly requires the right visibility and safeguards.”

In other words, from the point of view of a fleet managers, company vehicles are simply assets that need to be managed. Where do you draw the line between personal and business use? How can you prevent fraud? And what policies should you have in place before handing over the keys to an employee?

What complicates the issue even more is that not all company car programs are necessarily the same. Job site indeed.com explains it this way: “Some company cars are take-home vehicles, allowing employees to commute to the office conveniently. However, some company cars stay in the company compound or parking lot until an employee requires it for a delivery, site visit, an appointment or meeting, or any business activity that takes them away from the office. Who gets the benefit of a company car largely depends on the industry and type of business providing the vehicle.”

## It starts with a clear policy

Regardless of what a company car programs looks like in your organization, according to a team of experts at Element Fleet Management, step one is to implement clear eligibility and usage policies that outline who qualifies to take a company vehicle home and under what conditions.

“If the company directs the employee to perform a task that requires a vehicle, that is business use,” Element’s team explains. “The only consistent exception is commuting (driving to and from work), which is considered personal use under tax law.”


According to Element, vehicle assignments should be based on job requirements. Furthermore, there has to be an understanding that these privileges can be rescinded at any time.



“For example, a common benchmark might require employees to drive at least a certain number of business kilometres per year. Fleet managers should review annual taxable benefit reports to ensure employees meet this threshold and reassess vehicle assignments for those who fall below.”

Another point worth considering is developing different policies for services vs. sales fleets. According to Element, that policy should be reviewed by the organization’s HR team, union if applicable, as well as fleet management companies to ensure all organizations are able to operationalize the policy and the consequences if the policy is not being followed.

The policy should be updated as needed, and annual driver acknowledgement should be obtained. Element’s team says that the responsibility for understanding and adhering to legal definitions should rest with the employee. The policy should make this expectation clear. Including this accountability not only protects the organization, but also empowers employees to make informed decisions.



“Many fleet operators support take-home vehicle programs as a benefit to employees.”

LIZ KLEIN DIRECTOR,  
MID-MARKET & COMMERCIAL SALES

Policies should also set boundaries for personal use, and ensure drivers have a clean driver abstract. Element mentions that companies should prohibit using fleet vehicles for vacations or limit personal driving to within a specific geographic radius (e.g., 100 kms from home). These measures help preserve the business purpose of the vehicle and reduce unnecessary wear and risk.

### Weighing the risks

There are several risks associated with allowing employees to take company vehicles home, Element points out: “If the vehicle is parked in an unsecured area or is branded, it becomes more vulnerable to theft or vandalism. Liability also increases if the vehicle is used for unauthorized personal activities.”

Strict policies should explicitly prohibit high-risk use, such as ride-sharing (e.g., driving for Uber or Lyft) or using the vehicle to move personal items like furniture. Without such controls, Element’s team points out, companies could face in-

creased insurance claims, liability exposure, or even reputational damage.

### Monitoring use


One of the questions fleet professionals have to consider is whether or not they should monitor the use of company vehicles. According to Element, “Yes, fleet managers should monitor usage—at minimum, annually—to ensure vehicles are being used appropriately.”

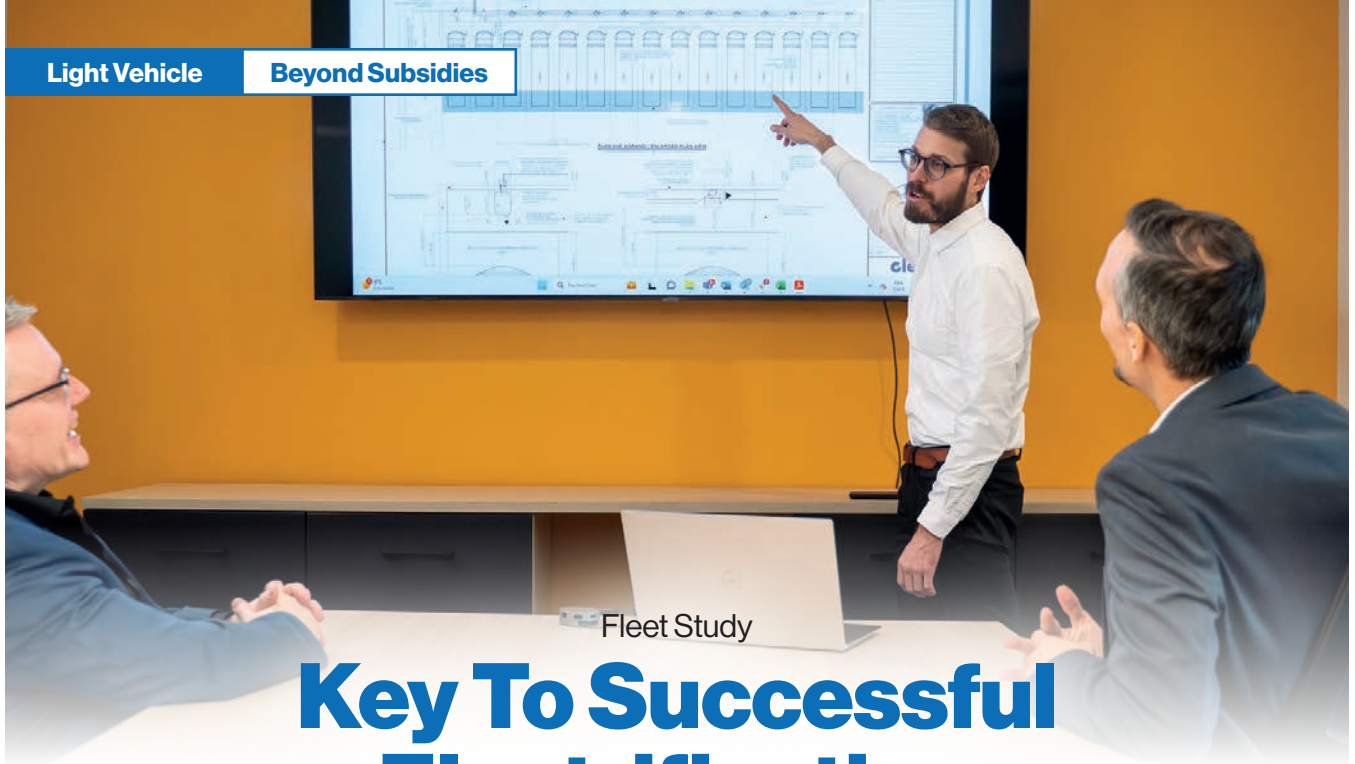
Furthermore, Element mentions that employees should be transparent about their personal mileage, if they use a company vehicle for non-work purposes. “Reviewing taxable benefit reports, or analyzing monthly or quarterly mileage data can help identify anomalies or excessive personal use. For instance, some companies want to see at least 50% of business kilometres vs. personal use.”

However, relying solely on the honour system may not be sufficient. According to Element, “Telematics and geofencing tools provide real-time insights into vehicle location and usage patterns, helping to enforce policy compliance. Cross-referencing fuel purchase data with trip records can also help detect out-of-policy usage.” Samsara’s Klein adds: “Companies can use real-time GPS tracking, geofencing, and trip tagging to clearly distinguish between business and personal use. Our platform helps ensure compliance with usage policies, monitor fuel consumption, and detect unusual activity—all while respecting driver privacy. This allows companies to optimize operations and maintain accountability, even when vehicles leave the yard each night.”

### Fuel card data

Another key consideration is whether or not each employee gets a fuel card. “Fuel cards are typically standard for employees who take company vehicles home,” Element’s team explains, “as they streamline expense management and improve visibility into fuel usage. In rare cases—such as possibly with executives—reimbursement may be handled differently, but this is the exception.” As mentioned above, to monitor personal vs. business fuel usage, companies can match fuel card transactions with mileage logs or telematics data. “A strong fleet policy will further reinforce responsible behaviour, for instance, by restricting use during personal vacations or outside a defined radius from the employee’s home or office,” Element’s team adds.

Clearly, company car privileges require forethought and planning. While the employee and the HR department may see it as a perk and a way to retain talent, fleet managers need to manage these assets, and monitor use, in order to limit risk and liability. 



Fleet Study

# Key To Successful Electrification

A study is your game plan for a successful transition to electric vehicles.

TEXT **GUILLAUME BROSSARD**

**F**inancial incentives, environmental concerns, regulatory pressure—whatever your motivation for transitioning to EVs, the process is a significant undertaking with numerous benefits. However, it also demands thorough planning, which will help you avoid unnecessary expenses and decisions that don't align with the realities of your operations. Without planning, it's like starting a renovation without first consulting an architect to properly assess your needs.

## What is a fleet study?

A fleet study is a detailed analysis of how your current vehicle fleet is used. It takes into consideration factors such as the size of the fleet, vehicle types, mileage, usage roles, travel patterns, and more.

The objective is to identify which routes and vehicles can be electrified immediately, determine the energy and charging infrastructure requirements, and calculate the total cost of ownership of electric vehicles compared with those with internal combustion engines.

Conducted by experts, a fleet study delivers a critical report to guide your planning, and includes information about:

- Telematics data or vehicle logbook analysis
- Usage assessments (frequency, required range, possible charging downtime)
- Evaluation of operational sites for charging installation
- Simulation of transition scenarios

## Why is it important?

As the first step in your electrification process, a fleet study offers several key advantages. First, it gives you a comprehensive, accurate, tailored, and realistic view of your operations and the implications of adding one or more electric vehicles to your fleet. Second, it enables informed decision-making when selecting vehicles and identifying both current and future charging needs. Moreover, a fleet study is an essential tool for evaluating operational and ownership costs. Finally, a fleet study serves as the foundation for your engineering and phased electrification plans, taking into account market readiness, available subsidies in your region, and your unique operational constraints.

## Starting your electrification journey

In short, a well-executed fleet study should be the starting point of a sustainable, high-performing, and economically-sound mobility strategy. For fleet managers, it's a must-have to avoid the pitfalls of a rushed or fragmented electrification process. The good news is, it's an eligible expense under many government grant programs. To get a high-quality fleet study conducted by electrification experts, contact Polara at [info@polara.energy](mailto:info@polara.energy).



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.

# More Involvement, Greater Skills

NAFA has been seeing some major growth in both membership and initiatives.

TEXT **BILL SCHANKEL**

**A**s we head into the summer, it's an ideal opportunity to look at what the year has brought us so far, and what's in store for the remainder of 2025. Our NAFA I&E (Institute & Expo) in Long Beach, California, in April was a big success, and we had lots of positive feedback on the event. From general sessions to the educational ones, there was something for everyone, and despite the uncertainty many of us face regarding economic challenges, higher borrowing costs, tariffs and others, there was a consensus that while things are still unpredictable, there are indicators that trends are normalizing, albeit slowly and sometimes intermittently.

## Regional growth

One of the biggest successes NAFA has witnessed over the last few years is the Regional Format and Local Networking Groups. The number of events continues to grow, and across the U.S. and Canada in 2025, we are looking at over 100 activities this year.

When establishing this format, a big focus for NAFA was to make it straightforward for members to host these events, and for others to gain access to them. Whether it's simply organizing a casual social gathering, planning group activities, or hosting a charity format, the key was making it easy and flexible to put these events together. Judging by the activity we've seen over the last two years, and the ever-expanding number of events, it has been hugely popular, and a great deal of credit must go to the volunteers who make this all possible.

We've had many fleet managers, suppliers and industry professionals stepping up and wanting to be involved. We've had all kinds of events and venues planned, including suppliers and fleets hosting them at their facilities.

## Greater involvement

With more people getting involved, and finding value in being together at these events, we've also seen NAFA's membership grow to one of the highest levels in recent memory.


It's one reason why we are continuously looking to drive value at the association. Our CAFM program is a key example. Achieving CAFM status says that as a fleet manager

you understand the complexities and the competencies that the role requires in today's operating environment. From asset procurement, allocation, use and disposal, to fuel and maintenance requirements, budgeting and staffing, safety and risk management—all these factors are a prime consideration when putting together the program. This year, we conducted a job task analysis to ensure that the content and materials that form the backbone of the CAFM program are still relevant for today's fleet professionals, and we will keep updating it to ensure it evolves alongside the changing nature of fleet operations and management.

## Looking for opportunities

At NAFA, we encourage individuals (not only CAFMs) to look for those opportunities, to look at our job task analysis, because that's helping to shape the future of the program and what it represents, since CAFM is really the mark of quality and having that certification demonstrates a very high level of proficiency when it comes to fleet operations. In addition to the eight core modules, we also have a sustainable fleet module that not only represents part of the program, but also one of the key pillars of NAFA as an association. Sustainability is at the heart of modern fleet operations, and we want to ensure that from emissions reduction to preventative maintenance, infrastructure, and even EV procurement—all bases are covered.

Another initiative I want to highlight is our Fleet Safety Certificate Program, which we officially launched during our Fleet Safety Symposium, held in Austin, Texas from June 2-3.

There is a new guidebook and course for this that's been added to our CAFM program, which, overall, we see as a platform for managers to develop really strong skills and proficiencies, so they can run their fleets as efficiently, safely and sustainably as possible. 



Bill Schankel, CAE, serves as Chief Executive Officer for NAFA Fleet Management Association. You can reach him at [bschankel@nafa.org](mailto:bschankel@nafa.org)



ISUZU

MORGAN



Isuzu Trucks

## The Unrivalled Leader in Cab-Over Trucks

Easy-to-drive and maneuver, these medium-duty trucks continue to dominate the market.

TEXT **CLAUDE BOUCHER**

**T**he medium-duty truck segment is one of the most competitive, with North American, Japanese, and European manufacturers fiercely battling for market share. Yet, one company dominates the cab-over segment: Isuzu.

With more than 44,000 trucks sold last year, this manufacturer celebrated their 40th anniversary in the U.S., and had every reason to do so. Their formula for success: easy-to-drive trucks, a strong dealer network, and a complete product lineup.

Isuzu, a global leader in commercial vehicle manufacturing, has been around for nearly a century. The Japanese manufacturer entered the North American market in 1984. Initially sold under the General Motors banner, Isuzu trucks were quickly taken up by businesses in both the United States and Canada. Since 1986, Isuzu has led cab-over truck sales in North America every single year.

In 2007, GM announced their exit from the medium-duty truck market. Isuzu Commercial Truck of America was established the following year, along with their Canadian subsidiary, Isuzu Commercial Trucks of Canada. In 2015, Isuzu reached a major milestone with 500,000 trucks sold in North America. [>](#)

Isuzu's diesel F-Series trucks are available in Class 6 and 7.

There are many reasons behind this success, but one stands out. The cab-over engine design, also known as cabover, offers several important advantages. First, visibility is far superior to that of a conventional truck with a hood. In a conventional cab, the driver’s line-of-sight to the ground begins about 24 feet

brands, like Volvo and International, which no longer sell cab-over models.

As a result, Isuzu has recorded their highest sales in North America over the past two years, including 44,000 trucks sold in 2024.

**“In Canada, it’s go big or go home. It’s our NRR class 5 truck with a 20 ft body. And that truck, in Quebec, makes it under 4500 kg weight, for a Class 5 driver’s license. The NRR gas is roughly 500 lbs. lighter.”**

TONY PARRAVANO SALES DIRECTOR, ISUZU COMMERCIAL TRUCKS OF CANADA

ahead. In an Isuzu truck, it begins at just eight feet. Another obvious benefit is that cab-over trucks can manoeuvre narrow urban streets with much greater ease. For Tony Parravano, Sales Director at Isuzu Commercial Trucks of Canada, this alone is reason enough to choose Isuzu. “Let me put it this way,” he says. “If you smack the front of one of our trucks, you’re not a very good driver. Don’t drive! If you drive a cutaway, you don’t see the bumper. So in a sense of easy-to-drive, it’s our trucks.”

With a tighter turning radius, Isuzu trucks are clearly easier to manoeuvre. For the same overall vehicle length, they can also carry a box that is about four feet longer, which increases available cargo space.

Most manufacturers have abandoned cab-over trucks, with only a few remaining in Class 6 and 7, or in the electric segment. Isuzu now dominates the cab-over truck segment in North America. In Canada, Isuzu has been able to grow their network by teaming up with dealers that carry other

### A full lineup

Another key to Isuzu’s success is their comprehensive lineup, with models ranging from Class 3 NPR (GVWR of 12,000 lbs.) to Class 7 FVR (GVWR of 33,000 lbs.).

In Classes 3 to 5, Isuzu offers a standard three-seat cab, and a crew cab that seats seven, which is a popular option for public service fleets. These N-Series trucks are widely used, and have gross vehicle weight ratings of up to 19,500 lbs.

In the U.S., the most popular model is the Class 4 NPR-HD, but the Canadian market is different, says Parravano.

“In Canada, it’s go big or go home,” he adds. “It’s our NRR class 5 truck with a 20 ft body. And that truck, in Quebec, makes it under 4500 kg weight, for a Class 5 driver’s license. The NRR gas is roughly 500 lbs. lighter.”

Isuzu has also fully redesigned the cab to offer greater comfort and the latest in driver-assist technologies.

Series	Model	Class	Cab	GVWR
N-Series Gas	NPR	3	Standard and Crew Cab	12,000 lbs.
	NPR-HD	4	Standard and Crew Cab	14,500 lbs.
	NQR	5	Standard and Crew Cab	17,950 lbs.
	NRR	5	Standard and Crew Cab	19,500 lbs.
N- Series Diesel	NPR-HD	4	Standard and Crew Cab	14,500 lbs.
	NPR-XD	4	Standard and Crew Cab	16,000 lbs.
	NRR	5	Standard and Crew Cab	19,500 lbs.
F- Series Diesel	FTR	6	Standard Cab	25,950 lbs.
	FVR Derated	6	Standard Cab	25,950 lbs.
	FVR	7	Standard Cab	33,000 lbs.
Electric Truck	NRR EV	5	Standard Cab	19,500 lbs.



Isuzu's new cab is more modern and aerodynamic.

### The comeback of gasoline engines

For the longest time, diesel was the default choice for medium- and heavy-duty trucks. Isuzu, however, chose a different direction. Their Class 3 NPR trucks now come exclusively with a gasoline engine. The GMPT L8T has a 6.6-litre V8 that produces 350 horsepower and is paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission.

In Class 4 and 5, customers can choose between the same 6.6-litre gasoline engine and Isuzu's 5.2-litre 215-hp diesel engine with a six-speed Aisin automatic transmission. And for Class 6 and 7 (FTR and FVR), the trucks are powered by the Cummins B6.7 diesel engine.

Why the move back to gasoline for medium-duty trucks? According to Parravano, the answer lies in emissions regulations. "A few years ago, we saw where the emissions were going, and diesel is being faded out," he says. "Let's say tomorrow, the bomb goes off, and they say no more diesel. Guess what, we can still sell trucks, because we have gas trucks. It basically makes us not as vulnerable as anybody else."

Gasoline engines also come with lower maintenance costs. Oil changes for the 6.6-litre engine can be done almost anywhere. Diesel engines, on the other hand, require additional systems, including particulate filters and selective catalytic reduction.

"The biggest term we were using when we first got the gas, is diesel fatigue," says Parravano. "People are sick and tired of the DEF system, of lights coming on, regeneration, etc. And the people that were diesel fatigued went for gas."

Parravano notes that gasoline is the better choice for businesses that drive less than 35,000 kilometres a year. That includes companies like landscapers, who often only use their trucks for five or six months out of the year. In the United States, gas and diesel Isuzu trucks each make up half the market. In Canada, 70 percent of sales are diesel, and 30 percent are gas.

### Isuzu's NRR EV looks ahead

Like many commercial truck manufacturers, Isuzu now offers a battery-electric version of their N-Series: the NRR EV, with a GVWR of 19,500 lbs. To meet various range needs, the NRR EV can be configured with three, five, seven or nine batteries. Depending on the number of packs, energy capacity ranges from 60 to 180 kWh, delivering a maximum range of up to 375 km. A nine-battery truck can be recharged in about 1.8 hours when fast-charging.

The NRR EV comes standard with the ISUZU360 telematics system, which allows fleet operators to remotely monitor key data, such as battery charging status, mileage, remaining range, and other useful metrics that support the transition to electric.

Isuzu's electric truck is just entering the market, and is expected to qualify for Québec's new Écocamionnage incentive program. Several units are currently being demonstrated at Isuzu's 37 Canadian dealerships, and Parravano says customer response has been overwhelmingly positive.

### North American manufacturing

Isuzu's diesel N-Series trucks, which are powered by Isuzu engines, are built and assembled in Japan. All other models, including the gasoline trucks, the Class 6 and 7 F-Series, and the NRR EV are assembled at Isuzu Commercial Truck of America's facility in Charlotte, Michigan.

In February, the company announced plans for a second assembly site in North Carolina. The new facility will allow all North American-assembled models, including the NRR EV, to be built on a single production line. Operations are expected to begin in 2027. The highly-automated plant will employ 700 people, and will help Isuzu respond more efficiently to growing demand. ○



# Clearing the Snow

A look at a range of options designed specifically for medium duty truck applications.

TEXT **HUW EVANS**

**H**eavy snowfall is a fact of life in many communities across Canada during the winter months. It is estimated that overall, the country spends approximately \$1 billion per year on snow removal.

## Vital service

From larger cities like Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Calgary and Edmonton, to small towns, snow clearing is a vital part of the Canadian economy, and a whole host of technologies and equipment are employed to keep streets, roadways, airports, parking lots, stations and other facilities clear of snow and ice. These range from large Class 7 and 8 trucks fitted with snowplows, dump bodies and spreaders, frequently used for clearing major highways and city streets, to heavy-duty and light-duty pickups equipped with front-mounted plows, used for clearing business parking lots, side streets, train and bus stations and other locations.

## Options to consider

While the concept of clearing snow is a simple one in theory, in practice, there are a range of options to consider when it comes to equipment and utilization. In this issue of Fleet & Mobility, we take a look at some of the snowplow and spreader options available in the medium-duty sector (Class 3-6 trucks). These types of vehicles are frequently used by both government and private fleets/contractors for clearing residential roadways and parking lots for commercial businesses, schools, stations and emergency facilities.

## BOSS Snowplow

Headquartered in Iron Mountain, Michigan, in the heart of the Great Lakes, BOSS Snowplow has established itself as a market

leader and innovator when it comes to snow clearing equipment. They produce, market and sell a whole range of snow clearing equipment, including plows designed for trucks, tractors and skid-steers, through truck mounted spreader units, de-icing equipment, as well as specialist vehicles for clearing paths and sidewalks.

## BOSS TEV Snowplow

The TEV is designed and built to tackle all snow conditions with unmatched efficiency and durability. Its Trip-Edge Design (TEV) lets the plow trip over low-profile obstacles without losing snow, ensuring a consistent clearing performance. BOSS Cold Front Technology replaces the traditional 13-pin plug with a streamlined connector, combining power, ground, and control wires for quick, reliable control. The SL4 LED headlights, with TIR Technology and ClearBeam, are designed to provide superior visibility and side illumination, while also offering added safety features like built-in turn signals and warning lights.

The BOSS TEV features a SmartTouch+ controller that's designed to deliver instant responsiveness, while the plow's rigid mouldboard enhances snow stacking. Equipped with AR450 cutting edges and curb guards, the TEV is built for long-lasting durability. It also features a Trip-Edge spring tension system that adapts to changing snow conditions, while the snow catcher ensures cleaner plowing while on the move.

## BOSS VBX+ Spreader

Engineered for today's contractors, the VBX+ was designed from the outset to combine innovation with performance. The VBX+ features a whole host of smart features that put the operator in full control, allowing precise material distribution and seamless



BOSS VBX+ truck mounted spreader.

job site tracking. The VBX+ 1.5yd auger is equipped with a de-icing capacity of up to 1.5 cubic yards, specifically designed for  $\frac{3}{4}$  and 1-ton heavy-duty pickup trucks and chassis cabs equipped with flatbeds or dump bodies. It is constructed to effectively break through frozen chunks of salt and sand. An added advantage for both independent contractors and fleet operators, are easy-to-maintain components, which help minimize downtime while providing top-tier power and performance. Boasting the latest in LED lighting, advanced safety features, and intuitive design enhancements, the VBX+ will optimize snow clearing efficiency when winter weather hits.

### Fisher Engineering

For over 75 years, Fisher Engineering has been making high-quality and innovative snow-clearing products from their headquarters in Rockland, Maine. Fisher's range of products are recognized as some of the most trusted brands in the up-fitting and snow clearing industry, and are designed to help operators perform their job as effectively and efficiently as possible, minimizing downtime, and maximizing profitability.

### Fisher HDX Snowplow

Designed for medium-duty pickup and chassis cab applications, the Fisher HDX is a high-quality, stainless-steel snow-



Fisher HDX Snowplow.

plow designed for clearing streets, parking lots and driveways. It features an adjustable blade attack angle and an oscillating A-frame, enabling operators to dial-in the snowplow to deliver superior snow clearing results regardless of the weather or the terrain. Clad with a clean stainless-steel mouldboard, this plow not only performs efficiently, it also looks the part.

### Western Products

Based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Western Products is a leading manufacturer of snow and ice control products. They offer a complete line of contractor grade snowplows designed for commercial operators, as well as plows designed for personal use and light municipal snow removal operations. Western Products offers a variety of hopper and tailgate-mounted ice control sand and salt spreaders, along with a wide selection of performance-enhancing snowplow and spreader accessories and parts.

### Western Marauder Spreader

Western's new MARAUDER stainless steel hopper has been designed and engineered to clear snow and ice as efficiently as possible. The MARAUDER is offered with either a new HELIXX shaftless auger for precise rock salt application, or a pintle chain conveyor system that's highly suited for thick, heavy de-icing materials. [O](#)



Western Products MARAUDER truck mounted spreader.

# Spec'ing for Snow

Here in Canada, right-sizing your snowplow fleet is key to success.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

In most parts of Canada, winter comes in one size only—extra-large. So if you're responsible for a snowplow fleet or a snow-removal fleet, you've got your work cut out for you. Our extra-large winters require extra-careful effort when spec'ing a medium-duty truck for your plowing needs.

## Upgrading to medium-duty

Many fleet managers begin the snow removal spec'ing journey with a simply question: Do we really need a fleet of medium-duty trucks, or can we get by with something less costly?

"It really depends on a number of factors including the type of plow and equipment, size and shape of the lots you need to plow, the route, etc.," says Joe Birren, Regional Engineer Manager, Holman. "Right from the start you need to establish a clear mission objective for your trucks."

Are you plowing mostly residential, commercial, industrial, or a combination of properties? Furthermore, how big or small are these properties, and what shape are the lots?

"Even some commercial or industrial properties may be hard to do with a medium-duty truck, or even a one-ton pickup with dual rear wheels," Birren explains. "The alleyways might be too narrow, or the parking lot configuration may be too tight."

On the other hand, if you're working on a huge property, like the parking lot of a mall or a big box store, then the benefits of a medium-duty truck with a wider plow are clear.

## One-season vs. all-season truck

While you're considering the type and size of the properties and lots you need to plow, another key consideration when spec'ing your trucks is whether you plan to use your trucks for the winter season alone, and let them sit idle the rest of the year, or whether your trucks will tackle other jobs when the weather warms up.

"What are you going to be doing with that truck when the summer comes?" Birren asks. "Will you be putting a dump or stakebed



body on it for landscaping, etc? Will you be towing with it? Or will that truck sit unused, waiting for the next winter season?"

## Plow size and weight matters

The size of the plow you intend to use also needs to be kept in mind. According to Birren, depending on specs and the route, a typical three-quarter-ton truck can handle a maximum eight-foot regular straight-blade plow. "If you go any larger than that, the front end of these trucks can't handle the weight and abuse of a longer plow," he says. "A steel or stainless steel plow can typically weigh up to a thousand pounds or more. If you mount that on the front of a ¾ ton truck, you may require a ride-leveling kit."

Another option might be to use a composite plow, which can weigh less than a thousand-pound traditional metal plow. However, Birren doesn't recommend it, depending on the application. "If you're using a poly plow in a rough commercial application, and you catch the corner of a building, large rocks, or curbs with it, they're not as forgiving and can crack," he says.

One factor that many fleet operators forget to consider is to check the width of the desired truck versus the width of the plow at full angle, and the turning radius of the truck. "When you're looking at a straight-blade application, the

“What other vocational applications will the truck perform off-season? Or will it sit under-utilized?”

**JOE BIRREN**  
REGIONAL ENGINEERING MANAGER,  
TECHNICAL SALES, HOLMAN



blade may appear to be just fine when it's parallel with the front of the truck," Birren explains, "but once the plow is at full angle, now it's only plowing part of the road ahead of you because it's not wide enough for the track of the truck, and that leaves you in an uneven situation where two of your wheels are travelling on a cleared, plowed road and the other two through deeper snow."

### **Bigger, not always better**

If your fleet tackles the really big jobs, like plowing highways after a storm, then perhaps the answer is a Class 6-8 truck with plows that have expandable wings on the side. However, Birren cautions that unless you really need a larger truck for these extreme applications, bigger isn't always better. "For example, some Class 5 trucks can take advantage of 8.5-11-ft. expandable plows and have the increased towing capacity benefits for use in the off-season," he adds.

The bigger you go, the more you have to spend on the initial acquisition cost of the truck, as well as on maintenance, fuel, and repairs, he says. "And depending on the application, don't always assume that you need a diesel engine. You can shave about 900 lbs. off the front of the truck and save over \$12k if you go with gas instead of diesel, and that's key when you're hanging a 1,000+ lbs. plow on the front. What kind of suspension and front and rear axle capacities are you going to require? Also, consider adding ballasts, when needed, for proper weight distribution and traction."

Birren notes that the diesel vs. gas debate has gone on for years, and it's likely not coming to end anytime soon. "A lot of people have this mindset that if they're plowing, then they must have a diesel engine," he says. "But that's no longer the case today with some of the more powerful and reliable gas engines on the market. Again, it depends on the application requirements."

### **Electrical needs, etc.**

Beyond the actual plow itself, you're also going to have to consider the increased electrical demands of the vehicle to help with the options that typically include dual alternators, auxiliary batteries, additional exterior lighting, strobes, beacons, radios, and other electronic devices.

Four-wheel drive is highly recommended, Birren says, as are locking differentials. He warns against buying trucks off a dealer's lot without carefully understanding the specs, and highly

recommends factory ordering to spec the truck direct from the manufacturer instead.

"The truck on the dealer lot may not have a snowplow package, or it may have a standard front suspension and front axle capacity," he says. "If you hang a thousand pound snowplow on that vehicle, you could be in trouble."

Finally, if you're also operating a salt or sand spreader at the back of your truck, you'll want to ensure the truck is rat-

ed for the extra weight, that your rear axle and suspension can handle the additional capacity, and that you have the wiring necessary to power the electric motor that spreads the salt or sand, and any additional lighting, etc. In short, there's a lot to consider. ○

**“The truck on the dealer lot may not have a snowplow package, or it may have a standard front suspension and front axle capacity. If you hang a thousand pound snowplow on that vehicle, you could be in trouble.”**

**JOE BIRREN**  
REGIONAL ENGINEERING MANAGER,  
TECHNICAL SALES, HOLMAN



## Go Big or Go Home

This auto body shop owner upgraded his facilities to take on the big jobs.

TEXT MICHEL BEAUNOYER

**D**avid Brodeur owns an auto body shop in Magog, Quebec—a part of the province that serves as a transit corridor to the United States. Like any good entrepreneur, he wanted to grow his business and to diversify his operations to include the repair of recreational and heavy-duty vehicles.

“There wasn’t a real service offering of this kind in our region, and I quickly spotted the opportunity,” explains Brodeur, Co-owner of Carrosserie All-Star, Heavy and Recreational Vehicles. “Before moving ahead with the idea, I validated the potential of this market with the insurance companies we work with for light-vehicle repairs. They confirmed that they were actively looking for quality repair services for commercial vehicles in our area.”

### Making the transition happen

The decision was made to expand the existing shop, and Brodeur brought in Maxime Mayrand, a diesel mechanic who was already part of the team, to help carry out the project as co-owner. For years, the shop had helped out truckers, delivery drivers, and construction companies. The time had come to make it a distinct division.

The shop opened in the spring of 2020, just in time to be caught up in the storm of the pandemic. Paradoxically, that period proved to be beneficial for the team. “We used the time to make sure we had the right equipment—and more importantly, the right repair processes,” says Brodeur.

Indeed, medium- and heavy-duty trucks often rely heavily on fiberglass in their body construction. Repairing them requires specific know-how. Moreover, for the safety of the workers—some of whom transitioned from the light-vehicle shop to the heavy-duty one—proper protective equipment is essential.

“We invested in training to learn how to work with this material,” says Mayrand, “and we also worked with the suppliers of our materials and paint to understand the correct processes. We had the time to run plenty of tests to find the best solutions.”

Today, the commercial vehicle team includes five technicians, with Mayrand lending a hand, as needed. Demand is strong—so strong that no promotion has been necessary for the past two years. A new expansion is even planned for this fall. “We want to add a second paint booth and put into operation a sandblasting system we acquired,” says Mayrand. “We want to offer custom service for construction equipment we can refurbish. There’s high demand for construction equipment upgrades in the fall, and snow removal equipment in the spring.”

### Managing time

The company’s management is well aware of how a commercial vehicle’s downtime impacts daily operations. Here, downtime directly affects the profitability of transport, delivery, or



The expertise developed by shop staff allows them to expand their services—sandblasting opens up industrial and construction markets.



This impressive paint booth can accommodate heavy-duty vehicles.

utility companies. The schedule is built accordingly, and in close collaboration with clients.

“We always leave open slots for urgent situations, like getting a truck back on the road after an accident,” says Mayrand. “Between those emergencies, we plan less time-sensitive work, like repainting a new truck in company colours. We have a solid team, and can deliver on promised timelines. With experience, we also know that what looks like a simple body panel repair might reveal more serious issues, like chassis corrosion. That’s why we always build in some flexibility.”

When asked what types of vehicles they repair most, in terms of volume, the partners said that their client base is very diverse. For example, the shop handles many commercial vans that other light-vehicle body shops don’t have the space or equipment to accommodate. The massive paint booth may be used one day for these vans, and the next for the cab and chassis of a heavy-duty truck—or even an excavator ready for a makeover.

### A growing sector

If the partners are considering adding more workspace, it’s because this distinct division is profitable. “You know, it makes sense that our hourly rate is high. One truck takes the space of four cars,” says Mayrand with a smile. Of course, the equipment is also more expensive, due to its greater capacity.

Having developed expertise in fibreglass repair, the shop also repairs many recreational vehicles and watercraft—contracts that nicely fill out the schedule in a region known for its outdoors activities.

“We’ve reached a nice balance in our operations,” notes Brodeur. “There’s a lot of variety in our team’s work, which keeps things interesting. We see significant seasonal fluctuations.”

In short, Carrosserie All-Star has successfully entered a promising market—similar to light-vehicle repair, yet entirely its own. [🔗](#)



By offering fibreglass repair services, the shop can diversify their clientele, as shown in this photo.



Volvo Trucks

Customer  
Center

VNL B40

VOLVO



Volvo VNL and VNR Heavy-Duty Truck

## Chasing Market Share

Volvo has undertaken a complete renewal of their heavy-duty truck lineup for North America.

TEXT **CLAUDE BOUCHER**

**V**olvo kicked off the renewal of their truck lineup last year with the launch of the new-generation VNL long-haul tractor, followed this year by the regional-haul VNR. Next in line are the battery-electric VNR, the heavy-duty VNX, and the vocational VHD. The goal behind this full redesign is clear: increase market share.

Nearly seven years after the previous VNR made its high-profile debut in Montreal, Volvo has begun a complete overhaul of their North American lineup. Development of the new generation started in 2017, and the first model was introduced last year. This is a complete redesign rather than one of the usual industry refreshes, often referred to as “hood jobs,” and limited to cosmetic updates.

“The all-new Volvo VNL and VNR are real game-changers”, says Matthew Blackman, Managing Director at Volvo Trucks Canada. “We’ve completely redesigned both trucks—with 90% being brand new—and the improvements are significant, especially when it comes to fuel efficiency. Both trucks are built to be more fuel-efficient than ever, which is not just great for reducing operating costs, but it’s also a win for the environment.” ➤

The new Volvo VNL



The new Volvo VNR

Everything has been redesigned, both inside and out, from the mechanical systems to the onboard technology. At first glance, the truck features a sleek, modern design that improves aerodynamics and delivers a seven percent reduction in fuel consumption on its own. A narrower, more rounded hood, a curved windshield, and closely-fitted fairing elements all work together to streamline airflow. The new VNL even earned a 2025 Red Dot Product Design Award in the commercial vehicle category.

“When most people hear design, they think of automotive or fashion, not heavy-duty trucks. However, for our team, design plays a critical role in everything from fuel efficiency to driver comfort,” says Brian Balicki, Head of Design, Volvo Trucks North America. “With the all-new Volvo VNL, we started with a blank sheet of paper and reimagined the truck from the ground up.”

Like the VNL, the new VNR comes with a redesigned interior that is more comfortable and driver-friendly. The dashboard is fully digital and introduces new features, including electric controls for the trailer and parking brakes. A key innovation is the addition of a 24-volt European electrical system, which allows for the integration of several technologies already used in Volvo trucks around the world. This system, a first in North America, is more powerful, more energy efficient, and compatible with a wide range of components developed

## “The all-new Volvo VNL and VNR are real game-changers”

**MATTHEW BLACKMAN** MANAGING DIRECTOR  
VOLVO TRUCKS CANADA

in Europe. The new Volvo models are also equipped with an advanced driver assistance system, Volvo Active Driver Assist (VADA), which includes pedestrian detection and automatic emergency braking, and issues alerts when the driver is unable to respond. A new optional camera-based mirror system is also available, allowing for smaller traditional side mirrors.

Under the hood, Volvo’s D13 engine has been upgraded with a new piston design, more efficient injectors, and a variable

flow oil pump. Together, these enhancements deliver an additional three percent improvement in fuel economy. The VNR, the regional-haul version built on the new platform, shares most of the same features with the VNL, but with a shorter hood, resulting

in a bumper-to-back-of-cab (BBC) measurement of 113 inches, instead of 125. It also comes with fewer options for exterior styling and interior comfort.

### First off the line

Volvo is the first truck manufacturer to carry out a complete overhaul of their entire product lineup. The goal behind this strategy is to increase their market share, which currently stands at just over 10 percent in North America, compared to nearly 18 percent in Europe. Volvo has set an ambitious target for 2030, says Magnus Koeck, Vice President, Strategy, Marketing & Brand Management at Volvo Trucks.



Volvo has introduced a brand-new robotic cell for assembling VNL and VNR cabs.

“We want to reach 15%, and I truly believe it’s possible,” says Koeck. “I’m very confident that we have everything we need in order to grow our business both in the U.S. and Canada. We announced last year that we will build an additional plant in Mexico, where we will build both Volvo and Mack trucks, then export to the U.S. and Canada. It’s happening as we speak. That will increase our overall capacity to meet our target. We don’t invest hundreds of millions of dollars if we are not confident that we can grow, and that goes for both brands in the U.S. and Canada.”

According to Matthew Blackman of Volvo Trucks Canada, the company is already seeing stronger results in the Canadian market. “Volvo’s market share in Canada has been consistently higher than our combined North American numbers,” he says. “We really attribute this success to two key factors: our strong dealer network across Canada, plus the loyalty of our customers over the years, and their ability to stay competitive in the market, which allows them to continue to make capital investments in their fleets. We’ve built some great relationships with fleets and drivers, and that trust has really helped us maintain a solid presence in the Canadian market.” Blackman reports that customer response to the new VNL has been overwhelmingly positive. “These trucks represent a revolution in both Volvo Trucks’ portfolio, and the industry as a whole,” he says. “We’re excited to see how they transform our customers’ fleet operations.”

## Energy transition

Volvo was the first manufacturer to offer a battery electric version of their regional haul truck. In Europe, their entire truck range is available with electric drivetrains, including the FM Low Entry model, designed for waste collection. As a result, Volvo now holds the top spot in global electric truck sales.

It is a promising market, says Koeck, but one that has been slow to gain momentum. Limited charging infrastructure, weakened environmental regulations in countries like the United States, and the lack of incentives in several markets have all contributed to slower adoption. Despite these challenges, he continues to believe in its potential.

“When we look back to 2017/2018, when we decided that we would do the VNR battery electric first, the market had expectations of going much faster than it has. It will come, for sure, and that’s why we are still putting lots of R&D money into the new technologies, including the battery electric.”

Volvo is also developing cleaner energy alternatives, including hydrogen. But according to Koeck, when it comes to long distance trucking, diesel is not about to be replaced anytime soon.

“We are continuing our path to develop all the different technologies, and we truly believe that there is room for different technologies,” Koeck adds. “I would say that diesel, in the foreseeable future, will still be the predominant fuel. That’s why we are still putting a lot of effort into developing that to be more fuel efficient, to be cleaner.”

# Roadside Results

Successfully managing and communicating data can have a big impact on reducing downtime.

TEXT **HUW EVANS**

It's a scenario that's familiar to many fleet managers. A vehicle is enroute with a delivery for a customer and it breaks down on the side of the road, temporarily stranding the load and the driver.

## Serious numbers

The result is unexpected downtime, that eats into operational costs and overall fleet efficiency. According to Vik Sridhar, Senior Manager, Group Product Management at Geotab, the company's own statistics reveal some very serious numbers. In 2024, among more than 3.3 million vehicles across Canada and the U.S., a staggering 1 million breakdowns were observed. This translates to 2.74 breakdowns per every 160,000 km (100,000 miles). Put another way, this means 8.7 million days of unplanned downtime which represents a whopping \$4.3 billion U.S. in costs for fleets.

Yet, despite such staggering statistics, roadside assistance is still often seen as simply an emergency fix. "It's something [fleets tend to] deal with when a

problem pops up," says Sridhar, who acknowledges that there is still a common mindset of "it won't happen to me."

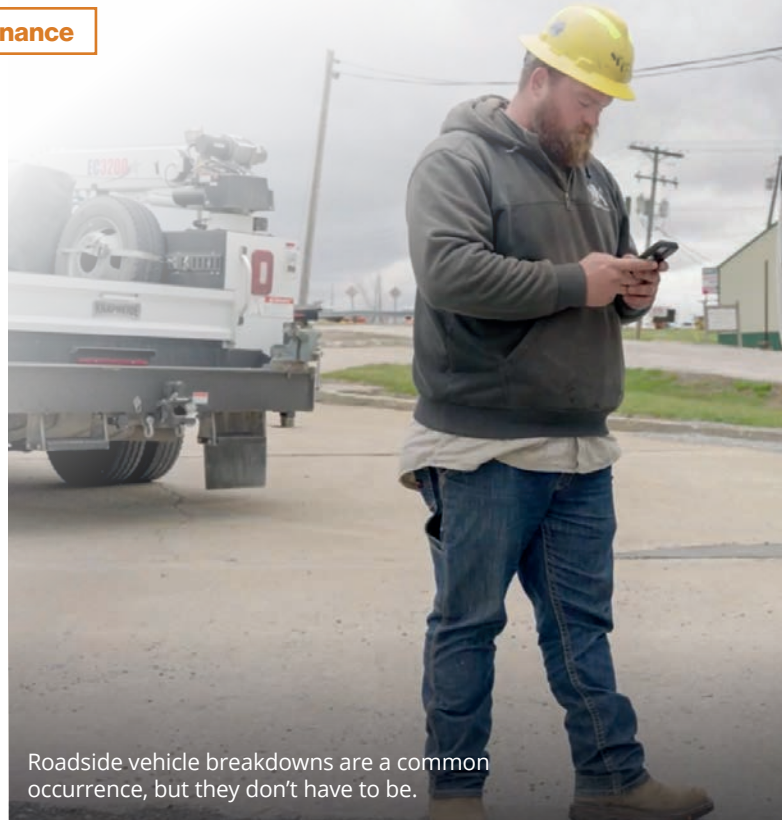
As a result, it's often underestimated and not seen as an integral part of overall operational strategy. He says for example, that when a vehicle breaks down or is involved in a crash, there's not only the cost of the tow, along with the maintenance and repairs required, but the cost in lost revenue for the fleet, driver downtime, administrative issues and headaches, not to mention the potential damage to the fleet's reputation, especially if the customer doesn't receive their delivery or support on time.

## Effective program

That's why it's important to develop an effective Roadside Assistance Program. Yet when doing so, there are some essential fac-

**"Each type [of vehicle] is going to have its different roadside needs."**

**VIK SRIDHAR** SENIOR MANAGER,  
GROUP PRODUCT MANAGEMENT, GEOTAB



Roadside vehicle breakdowns are a common occurrence, but they don't have to be.

tors to consider. While price is important, it shouldn't be the only consideration. Sridhar says that fleets need to understand that while price should factor in, a more important aspect is whether the provider properly stands behind their product—in other words, are they transparent when it comes to pricing and features and are they reliable and can be counted on when needed?

Sridhar explains that fleets also need to see how their vehicle mix, and operational aspects can work with the Roadside Assistance program the provider is offering. For example, are they running a fleet of delivery vans, pickup trucks, or more specialized vehicles? "Each type [of vehicle] is going to have its different roadside needs," says Sridhar, who also notes that the type of operating environment also factors in, such as whether vehicles are being used in urban or rural settings, or perhaps a combination of both. "Whether it's in the city, out in the country, or even off-road, that directly impacts which Roadside Assistance provider is best suited for your needs."

## Strong network

That's why he says, it is critical to be talking to reputable providers that have a strong network which covers the areas in which a fleet operates, particularly in more remote regions. "The last thing you want to do is be dealing with no shows, where they say somebody is on the way and then nobody shows up," states



Sridhar. There's also the question of repair and data access to vehicle repair and service data and that applies equally whether the vehicle is at the depot or out on the road.

"Using a fleet maintenance or management platform with mobile-first functionality can really help ensure that every team member—from drivers to technicians to managers—can view accurate asset records anytime, anywhere," says Kevin Chan, Director of Product Marketing at Fleetio, which provides maintenance software for fleets. Chan explains that this applies whether it's registration documentation or upcoming scheduled preventive maintenance (PM). "Buy-in across every team member is so important to gain the type of visibility across your fleet to make the right decisions," says Chan.

### Integration benefits

Additionally, because many fleets are already utilizing more than one maintenance management tool and telematics solution, they can realize the benefits of using integrations to consolidate data that's coming from multiple sources. Some examples include individual vehicle maintenance history, OEM service recommendations, as well as vehicle inspection results and parts inventory. By doing so, fleet managers can eliminate communication gaps in their reporting methods, reducing the risk of error through manual data entry and ensure that team fleet members can make informed decisions no matter where the vehicle is located.

### Centralization

Additionally, having a centralized system that integrates your

existing fleet management software is also essential, not only to ensure seamless communication but also, to provide effective data capture. "A lot of our fleet customers are trying to understand how they can connect roadside incidents back to their vehicle maintenance history and diagnostic data inside of my Geotab to prevent future incidents from happening," explains Vik Sridhar.

He notes that still, it is commonplace for fleets, especially larger ones with regional branches across the country to leave roadside assistance up to the individual locations who go with their own provider that works with their requirements. The trouble is, says Sridhar, that when roadside events occur, that data is not being captured by a centralized system, so it isn't always visible at a corporate level. He says it's one reason why Geotab Roadside was built, to offer fleets a centralized system where the information regarding incidents such as breakdowns and collisions is readily available across the organization with full visibility.

And it's proving to be effective. Citing a particular case study with the State of Connecticut in the U.S., decided to adopt Geotab's Roadside program in January 2022. "Prior to that," says Sridhar, they'd been using a separate roadside service." He notes that the size of the fleet meant that a centralized system could make a huge difference to how roadside assistance and fleet maintenance were handled. "Since January 2022, they've completed 1,800 roadside requests, and they've realized savings of over \$226,000 by utilizing the Geotab roadside program, which is included with each Geotab subscription."

### PM compliance

At Fleetio, Kevin Chan notes that having a Preventative Maintenance (PM) compliance policy is critical to ensure fleets minimize any downtime and that the maintenance software they use, should make it easy to schedule, track, and verify PM tasks based on OEM schedules, asset usage, and real-world failure patterns.

Additionally with tools such as digital inspection technology, drivers can report real time failed item alerts immediately they occur and relay that information so that fleet managers and technicians can tackle problems before they escalate. Chan notes that over time, these kinds of insights can prove extremely helpful since they can reveal pattern failure trends, enabling fleets to develop predictive maintenance strategies that can actively address reoccurring maintenance and/or service issues before the vehicle breaks down. [🔗](#)

# Evolution of An Industry

The trucking industry is changing, and so is the demand for truck tires.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

**T**he commercial tire market is a moving target. The industry is changing quickly, and tire manufacturers are working hard to keep up with changing demands and market conditions.

“The commercial tire industry continues to evolve, with fleets adapting to shifting logistics demands and prioritizing total cost of ownership when selecting tires,” says Gus Liotta, General Manager, Commercial Sales - Canada at Goodyear. “For example, some super-regional fleets are increasingly operating on shorter routes between shipping hubs to improve efficiency and better align with last-mile delivery networks. To support this, fleets require tires that deliver long miles to removal, perform in high-scrub environments, and can be retreaded in order to maximize their investment.”

Fuel economy is another key issue for commercial fleets. “We’ve seen an increased demand for fuel-efficient tires,” says Angela Crivoi, Senior Market Planning Manager at Yokohama Tire Canada. “It’s the number one demand we’re seeing from fleets.”

Jim Garrett, Product Category Manager at Michelin North America says he’s seeing a similar trend. “Michelin continues

to see lowering rolling resistance to be a trend,” he explains. “As tires are being replaced, the new ones generally have lower rolling resistance. This is due to advances in technology, rubber compounds and general tire design. This comes from tire manufacturers, truck OEMs and fleets striving to reduce their environmental impact.”

## Last-mile delivery & e-commerce

Yokohama’s Crivoi notes that she is also seeing a growing demand for tires for the last-mile delivery segment of the market, especially since e-commerce is so big nowadays. “And since emissions are also a growing concern,” she adds, “we’re also seeing a growth in the number of electrified delivery vans, and the tires they need.”

Riley Johnson, National Director of Commercial Segment for Groupe Touchette agrees. “With the increase in e-commerce, we’re seeing a lot more trucks and trailers hauling across the nation,” he explains. “For example, we’re looking at a big expansion at the port in Vancouver, which will triple the number of containers coming into the lower mainland, and all that cargo is going to be hauled by trucks and trailers.”

As for electrification, Riley brings out that we’re seeing electric trucks on the road today, which calls for commercial tires that can handle the extra weight and torque these trucks are known for.

## Price pressures

Today’s fleets are also demanding more bang for their buck, explains James McIntyre, SVP Sales Canada / Product Development North America, Sailun Tire Americas. “We’re seeing sev-



**Yokohama 114R**

The Yokohama 114R trailer tire features a high-scrub tread compound and rounded shoulder ribs. Suitable for both closed axle or spread axle trailers it’s designed to increase productivity and reduced costs.



**Double Coin RSD4**

The Double Coin RSD4 is a drive tire with a 3PMS rating for severe winter conditions. It offers exceptional grip and control on icy roads, and a confidence-inspiring driving experience in harsh weather.



**Rovelo RDL3-LF**

The Rovelo RDL3-LF is a drive tire with a 29/32nds tread depth for long tread life. It’s designed with three rows of aggressive tread blocks for traction and resistance to tread squirm.

eral important shifts in the commercial tire space—not just in product trends, but in how fleets are approaching tire purchasing and management,” he says.

Tariffs are a big part of the problem, McIntyre adds. “With the recent tariffs on imported tires from key manufacturing countries, the potential for price increases is real. As a result, now more than ever, fleets are being forced to take a closer look at their operating costs, and tires are a major part of that equation,” he says.

McIntyre notes that there seems to be a shift in fleet behaviour. “They’re investing in products that deliver longer tread life, better fuel efficiency, and ultimately, lower total cost of ownership,” he explains. “With the advancements we’ve made in compound technology and tire design, we’re now able to offer commercial tires that not only last longer but also help improve fuel mileage—and all at a significant price savings. That’s proving to be a very attractive value proposition for fleet operators navigating uncertain economic conditions.”

## Tariffs

One of the big issues facing the total cost of ownership calculation is tariffs. “Commercial tire prices in Canada will rise this year, in part due to ongoing tariffs,” says John Hagg, Vice President Sales and Operations at Huayi Tire Canada. “These trade-related costs are putting upward pressure on the supply chain, from manufacturing to distribution. Additionally, factors like raw material costs, transportation, and inflation are contributing to overall pricing increases across the industry.”

That said, Mike Matesic, Product Segment Manager, TBR at Dynamic Tire explains that tariffs aren’t impacting all commercial tire manufacturers equally. “The industry has already seen an increase in pricing on tires that are coming from the U.S. due to reciprocal tariffs,” he says, “but for products coming from countries other than the U.S., it’s business as usual. The only concern may be the strength of the Canadian dollar since tires are traded globally in USD.”

## Impact on commercial tire sales

Tire retailers may well wonder if all this uncertainty will translate into a drop in commercial tire business this year. According to Huayi Tire Canada’s Hagg, it’s a bit of a mixed bag. “Tariffs are expected to continue having a negative impact on the commercial tire market in Canada, particularly for long-haul, north-south trucking operations,” he says. “Until there is an updated agreement or revision to the USMCA, this segment may face ongoing challenges. However, demand for last-mile delivery tires remains strong, and is likely to continue growing—at least as long as consumer spending stays robust.”

Dynamic Tire’s Matesic agrees, and offers a bit of hope. “If your customers’ primary business focus is cross-border hauling of any items that have substantial tariffs on them, then the short and simple answer is yes, your business will be impacted,” he says. “That said, the trucking industry is always changing to suit the needs of the market. If trucks don’t go south due to tariffs, there will be product coming and going from the ports, east and west, to accommodate the market changes and deal with tariffs. The trucking industry will always adapt, change, and survive!”



### Cooper Work Series RHA 2

The Cooper Work Series RHA 2 is a regional haul all-position tire with a balanced long haul and regional tread compound that resists wear in high-scrub super-regional and regional applications.



### Sailun SDL70

The Sailun SDL70 is a premium closed-shoulder drive tire designed with a 240 mm wide footprint and 30/32” tread depth to deliver maximum mileage, stability and ride comfort.



### Hercules Strong Guard H-DO

The Hercules Strong Guard H-DO is a premium open-shoulder drive tire. It takes advantage of advanced compounds to deliver extended mileage, excellent wet traction and stable handling.

# Pushing The Green Envelope

Starship 3.0 NG offers a glimpse into the future of the trucking industry.

TEXT JACK KAZMIERSKI

**S**even years ago, Shell launched the Starship program in collaboration with industry partners as a way to inspire the trucking industry and demonstrate the potential of energy-efficient technologies in real-world applications.

“The goal of the program is to demonstrate how the commercial road transport sector as a whole can collaborate to reduce energy usage and CO2 emissions by harnessing the best of currently available technologies,” explains Scott Burian, Integrated Communications Manager at Shell.

The first two versions of the Shell Starship showcased significant advancements in fuel economy and freight-ton effi-

“The goal of the program is to demonstrate how the commercial road transport sector as a whole can collaborate to reduce energy usage and CO2 emissions by harnessing the best of currently available technologies.”

SCOTT BURIAN

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, SHELL

ciency. According to Shell, Starship 2.0 achieved an impressive 254 ton-miles per gallon for freight ton efficiency – 3.5 times the North American average of 72 ton-miles per gallon. Moreover, it attained 10.8 MPG on a cross-country run, surpassing the 6.4 MPG North American fleet average.

## Natural gas engine

While the first two generations of the Starship employed a diesel engine, the program’s latest creation runs on natural gas. “With Shell’s low-viscosity natural gas lubricants,” Burian explains, “and the availability of compressed natural gas and renewable natural gas for fleets, it really made sense for Shell Starship 3.0 NG to have a natural gas engine.”



The newest Starship has a Cummins X15N natural gas engine, which can produce as much as 500 hp and 1,850 lb-ft of torque. It weighs less than Cummins’ earlier 15L diesel models, and significantly reduces emissions. It can run on natural gas or renewable natural gas, and is capable of meeting stringent EPA and CARB regulations.

The third-generation Starship boasts an array of advanced technologies that optimize performance including low-rolling

resistance tires, a best-in-class aerodynamic cab and trailer, an efficient powertrain, and driveline components designed for lightweight and low aerodynamic drag.

The lubricant package includes Shell Rotella NG Plus SAE 5W-30 FA-4 synthetic engine oil. This low-viscosity oil reduces flow resistance and friction, which translates into better fuel economy. The transmission uses Shell Spirax S6 GME 40, a synthetic lubricant that is specifically formulated to protect high-torque transmissions paired with increased horsepower engines.

## Key categories of improvement

Burian says that the Shell Starship team focused on four key



Shell Starship 3.0 NG is the first to run on natural gas.

areas of improvement when designing the truck: reducing weight, reducing opposing forces, tank-to-wheel efficiency, and the driver.

“Light-weighting means using lightweight components for the chassis, powertrain, driveline, etc.,” Burian explains, “and we expect tractor frames to be 30-40% lighter in the future.”

Reducing opposing forces includes the rolling resistance of the tires. “Between 40-50% of the energy used to move a truck at highway speeds is used to overcome tire friction,” Burian says. “Another significant opposing force is aerodynamic drag, and our coefficient of drag, thanks to the aero packages is 0.25, whereas the industry average is about six.”

Tank-to-wheel efficiency, also known as parasitic losses within the system, can be minimized by the use of advanced lubricants, Burian says, while the last piece of the efficiency puzzle is a driver who has been trained to adopt driving habits that boost efficiencies.

While Starship 3.0 NG was engineered to cater to the needs of the North American trucking industry, Shell’s latest project, Starship 3.0 Hybrid, has been tailored to suit the needs of China’s heavy-duty road transport fleets. “It comes with a FAW-JF Aowei 11L hybrid dedicated internal combustion engine, LFP batteries, and an electric motor,” Burian explains. “The engine charges the battery, as do the solar panels on the roof, much like the Starship 3.0 NG.”

Although Shell hasn’t announced plans to build a Starship 4.0, Burian says they’d be happy to work with industry partners to push the efficiency envelope even further in the near future. [O](#)

“We expect tractor frames to be 30-40% lighter in the future.”



# Planning for a Resilient Future

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed lots of things, including ways to mitigate future challenges when it comes to fleet vehicle procurement.

TEXT **HUW EVANS**

**P**andemics, supply chain disruptions, trade wars, geopolitical tensions. All of these have severely disrupted the automotive and transportation sectors over the last several years. For fleet managers, this has resulted in a whole host of challenges in which to navigate their businesses through.

## Correction and strategy

With that in mind, NAFA hosted an Education Session entitled Post-Supply Chain Fleet Correction and Planning for a Resilient Future during its 2025 Institute & Expo (I&E) Conference at the Long Beach Convention Center in Long Beach, California.

Assembled for the panel discussion were Chris Brown, Associate Publisher, Automotive Fleet, Tim Mundahl, Director of Fleet Consulting, Merchants Fleet; along with Charles Mathew, Assistant Director, Order & Upfit at Merchants, as well as Justin Lamden, National Sales Manager, Large Commercial Fleet for Stellantis and Shelby Simpson, Manager, Strategic Partnerships, Adrian Steel.

## Stronger relationships

While the COVID-19 pandemic was horrendous and hugely disruptive for many businesses, Justin Lamden noted that one benefit was that it forged closer and stronger relationships between stakeholders in the fleet industry, allowing them to look at solving problems collectively and navigating through the highly unpredictable situation.

One of the biggest changes that occurred during the pandemic was a massive decline in vehicle availability. Supply chain disruptions and idling of manufacturing facilities meant that order banks were not open to fleet customers and if they were, vehicle availability was extremely limited and incentives often non-existent. Charles Mathew noted that a shortage of semiconductor chips was a huge challenge from OEMs, and one which severely impacted vehicle availability as well as op-

tions and features. This resulted in many fleet organizations having to rethink their acquisition and use strategies, altering procurement plans and look at ways to manage and maintain the assets they had.

## Retail priority


Mathew said that limited vehicle availability meant that often, OEMs would assemble vehicles as best they could but then keep them on their lots, preventing them from being sold until all the components were installed. And when it came to sales, retail orders were prioritized, leaving fleets starved for inventory and new orders and if they could get them, the lack of incentives and high demand meant significant price increases were commonplace, making a sizeable impact on fleet managers' budgets.

Tim Mundahl noted that the pandemic emphasized the need for fleet organizations to be nimble and for managers to work directly with other business partners and departments and ensure open communications to make fast and informed decisions. Understanding the process and plans have become essential to ensure that should further challenges arise, fleet managers are well-positioned to handle them successfully and mitigate issues such as fleet procurement costs and timelines.

## Condition and mileage

On the subject of used vehicles, Mundahl said that while that can be a very sound option if new orders can't be fulfilled, use cases as well as vehicle condition and mileage must be considered, since it is traditionally far easier to order a new vehicle that's tailored to a fleet's specific requirements than sourcing a slightly used one that may or may not properly fit a particular need within the fleet without modification, either in terms of the product itself, or how it's utilized.

Besides the vehicles themselves, how fleets work with upfitters in the post pandemic environment is also crucial. When orders are delayed in directly impacts upfitting, which is why, as Shelby Simpson noted, fleets need to view upfitting as a strategic function that's integral to their business plans and operational strategy and not as an afterthought following vehicle acquisition.

Tim Mundahl, summarized, in stating that by planning early and ensuring that plans are consistent and continuous, while also embodying flexibility, will ensure that disruptions to fleet vehicle acquisition and operations can be mitigated successfully, no matter what changes occur in the market or the economy. 



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