

COTS vehicle: Rivian Delivery 500



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As time nears for the Postal Service to replace older model delivery vehicles, more action will be needed to prepare for the transition. This month, I will share information on another commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) vehicle being considered for the delivery fleet.

In February, USPS sent notification of its intent to do a pilot test of the Rivian Delivery 500 vehicle. The Rivian Delivery 500 is a battery-electric COTS vehicle with almost 500 cubic feet of cargo space. Testing of the vehicle was to be conducted March 25-April 26 at the Vienna Post Office in

Vienna, VA, and driver training began March 18. Four carriers received training from a Driver Safety Instructor (DSI) and were to test and drive the vehicle on their assignments on a rotating basis. My staff visited the Vienna Post Office to observe the driver training and testing of the vehicle. The Rivian Delivery 500 is a left-hand drive vehicle that, at 9 feet, 7 inches tall, is larger than a Promaster but smaller than the 2-ton postal truck. It is a front-wheel drive model that uses regenerative braking to extend its range and is expected to reach 140 miles on a full charge. The vehicle requires a key fob to unlock and operate. When the key fob is within a range of about 10 feet, the doors unlock automatically to allow a carrier access

and when the key fob is outside of the 10-foot range, the doors lock automatically.

There are two monitors located in the dashboard. One monitor is just above the steering wheel and displays a map of the delivery area, the vehicle's current battery charge, radio station and gear shift. This monitor also displays notifications related to seat belt use, headlights, windshield wipers and open doors. The windshield wipers are activated by sensors but also can be controlled manually. The second monitor is in the middle of the dashboard and contains touch screen controls for many of the vehicle's features, including air conditioning, heat, defroster and fans located in the cabin and cargo area. Other

touch screen controls included are for navigation tools, power side mirrors, the radio, cabin and cargo lights, and Bluetooth accessibility. The Rivian Delivery 500 is also equipped with a 360-degree camera view of the vehicle, which is shown to the driver on this second monitor.

The cabin area contains a sliding bulkhead door that separates it from the cargo area like other models in the USPS delivery fleet. This door opens automatically when the gear shift is placed in park, and the door closes automatically when the gear shift is placed in drive. The sliding door also can be opened and closed manually using a touch-screen control on the dashboard monitor. The vehicle's cargo area can accommodate taller carriers with a measurement of 7 feet from the floor to the ceiling. The area contains two levels of shelving with three shelves along each side of both levels for a total of 12 shelves available for use. The final sets of shelving in the rear of the cargo area are adjustable to accommodate larger packages. The rear door opens manually from the inside or by pushing a button on the outer rear of the vehicle.

When speaking to carriers involved with the pilot, my staff found that many of them had favorable opinions regarding some of the vehicle's modern features, such as the rain-sensing windshield wipers, the 360-degree camera view, and the automatic sliding cargo door. Each carrier noted that they had to adjust to the regenerative braking system when driving. The carriers also believed the cargo shelves needed borders and dividers to help better secure the mail.

One of the more concerning things about the Rivian Delivery 500 is that there is neither a traditional ignition nor push button used to turn the vehicle on or off. Once the key is in range and the carrier is seated, shifting the gear is all that's needed to begin driving. The vehicle automatically turns off when the carrier places the vehicle in park and steps out of range. The Rivian Delivery 500 may look familiar because a version of this model is currently in use by Amazon delivery drivers.



I want to thank the city carriers in the Vienna Post Office for their hospitality and helpful feedback and experiences on the Rivian Delivery 500. As always, my staff and I will continue to monitor this initiative and provide updates to the membership. Be sure to read my article each month and visit nalc.org for the latest information.