

# City Delivery updates



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**I**n this month's column, I want to update you on the recent activities related to two USPS initiatives.

## USPS Connect Local

In my article in the October 2021 edition of *The Postal Record*, I informed you of a new USPS delivery initiative, USPS Connect Local, which is designed for small and micro-business customers who ship locally and want same-day or next-day delivery in their surrounding areas. Connect Local was piloted in seven locations in the Dallas and Houston metro areas beginning in July 2021.

Over the summer, the test was subsequently expanded to the rest of Texas. I now want to update you on the recent changes to the USPS Connect Local program.

In February, the Postal Service informed me of the official launch of the USPS Connect Local program. USPS Connect Local offers same-day and next-day local-to-local package and mail-delivery service for micro- to medium-sized businesses. USPS Connect Local also provides new Parcel Select package and First-Class Mail options. Beginning in February, USPS Connect Local is being offered in 2,622 select locations across the country. Letter carriers interested in learning more about the USPS Connect Local program should read my October 2021 article, which can be found on the NALC website.

## Small Delivery Unit Sorters

In my January article, I informed the membership that the Postal Service had notified me of its intent to resume deployment of Small Delivery Unit Sorters (SDUS), which had previously been suspended prior to peak season. USPS provided me with a list of locations and a tentative schedule for deployment of 21 SDUS machines by March 12.

Recently, City Delivery staff traveled to two of these locations to observe the SDUS machine in operation. According to the USPS Standard Work Instruction (SWI), the SDUS is designed to use a minimum of three employees for optimal operation—a Stager, a Facer and a Sweeper. The Stager retrieves the parcel containers from the appropriate staging lanes, removes any plastic shrink wrap, if necessary, and transports the parcels to the staging area for distribution. The Facer places the parcels one at a time on a conveyer belt, which then

moves the parcel under a camera that reads the USPS Tracking or Intelligent Mail barcode. The barcode information from the camera is then communicated to a computer, which prompts the conveyer belt to direct each parcel into the appropriate carrier route hamper.

As the Facer empties the parcel container, the Stager will remove the empty equipment and bring the next container for distribution. The third employee, the Sweeper, monitors the machine during operation to ensure that the parcels do not get caught up on the conveyer belt and that any rejected parcels get returned to the Facer for re-processing by the machine or manually distributed to the appropriate carrier route.

In one delivery unit observed, the SDUS sorted parcels at a rate of approximately 2,100 parcels per hour. USPS states that the SDUS is capable of sorting up to 3,300 parcels per hour; however, this rate is dependent on the number of employees facilitating the distribution and the speed at which the employee is able to load the machine.

During the observations, it became apparent that the machine was most effective when used after all of the parcel volume had arrived in the delivery unit. The SDUS machine is able to run only one sort plan at a time; therefore, if all of the drop-ship and/or network parcels for the chosen sort plan have not yet arrived in the delivery unit, the machine will remain idle until they arrive. In a delivery unit with multiple sort plans, the machine typically will not be switched over to another sort plan until all of the parcels for the initial plan have been processed.

I believe that delivery units with appropriate clerk/mail handler staffing and early/reliable transportation schedules will benefit the most from the SDUS. In offices with large parcel volumes, parcel distribution in

the morning can take an extensive amount of time. I am hopeful that use of the SDUS in some of these offices will allow city carriers to begin morning office activities earlier, leave for their routes earlier, and provide our customers with the consistent early delivery of which letter carriers are proud.



A Small Delivery Unit Sorter in action