

New delivery vehicle update



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Since I last wrote about the subject of the need for new vehicles, NALC and the Postal Service have continued working to identify and address the transportation needs of letter carriers by exploring and implementing various ways to replace our current fleet.

There is no way around the fact that our current fleet of collection and delivery vehicles is aging. The long-life vehicle (LLV), which makes up about 142,000 out of the 190,000 delivery-vehicle inventory, was introduced in the late 1980s, and the flexible fuel vehicle (FFV) was introduced in the early 2000s. The problem here is obvious, but beyond the issue of the age of our current vehicles, a

newly designed vehicle is necessary to accommodate increased daily parcel volume as well as the new services we offer, such as Sunday parcel delivery and grocery delivery.

Our No. 1 goal remains to make sure that any newly designed vehicle is as safe, ergonomic, and convenient as possible for letter carriers, while accommodating the work we currently perform and will perform in the years to come.

The next generation delivery vehicle (NGDV) is the term being used by the Postal Service to identify the new custom-made right-hand drive delivery vehicle that is currently in the design stages. Over the past two years, NALC has had many meetings with USPS to discuss what should be included in a new vehicle. Additionally, I have spent a great deal of time talking to letter carriers about what they would like to see incorporated in the new design. While some of the responses were particular to certain geographical areas and climate types, many of the suggestions were very common. NALC also brought three letter carriers, each from different parts of the country, to Washington, DC, to provide detailed, thorough input on design ideas.

The Postal Service incorporated our suggestions into a lengthy document that included specifications for the NGDV and released a request for information (RFI), which detailed those specifications. Manufacturers then submitted proposals for a vehicle meeting the requirements.

As I have previously reported, the specifications call for a much larger cargo area that will allow carriers to walk into it from the cab of the vehicle to retrieve mail. Another design idea is an additional curbside sliding door in the cargo area. A door here, where letter carriers could exit and work from the vehicles on the curbside, instead of from the back, would minimize the risk of devastating accidents that

in the past have resulted in very serious injury or death of carriers who were pinned between an oncoming vehicle and their vehicle.

Other requirements include better air flow for a more comfortable vehicle. Safety and security improvements, such as automatic locking doors and automatic parking brakes, are also included, as well as some interior details such as cup holders, scanner charging ports and places to keep rubber bands, pens and forms.

In the very near future, USPS will select manufacturers to produce prototype vehicles for extensive future testing. Ultimately, after testing of these prototypes is completed, a vehicle manufacturer will be selected, the new fleet will be produced, and deployment of those vehicles is most likely to begin in 2019. USPS plans to purchase a total of 180,000 of these vehicles at a cost of \$25,000 to \$35,000 each.

The Postal Service has recently tested and deployed two other new types of collection and delivery vehicles as well. The ProMaster extended capacity delivery vehicle (ECDV) is a new left-hand drive vehicle designed primarily for park-and-loop routes and parcel delivery.

In October 2015, NALC attended the first article test and inspection of this vehicle. All aspects of the vehicle were tested and measured to ensure the vehicle's comfort, safety, durability and usefulness to the work we perform. Some of the features include air conditioning, a taller cargo area that allows most carriers to stand upright, more cargo space, improved shelving, and more modern features and comforts. Most importantly, the design of this vehicle includes a sliding cargo-area side door for improved safety when entering, exiting and working from the vehicle.

A total of 12,472 ProMasters are being purchased by the Postal Service. More than 10,000 of these vehicles are currently deployed. The remaining vehicles are scheduled to be deployed by the end of November.

A new two-ton vehicle has also been tested and deployed. In September 2015, NALC attended the first article test and inspection of these vehicles as well. Some of its features include air conditioning, a gasoline engine, quieter interior when driving, improved shelving, more cargo space, and a slightly longer body.

A total of 6,533 new two-tons are being purchased by the Postal Service. Around 1,500 of these vehicles are deployed, with an additional 1,500 being deployed by December. The remaining 3,533 vehicles will be deployed by November 2017.

So far, we have received an overwhelmingly positive response from those carriers who are already using both of these new types of vehicles. We will continue to work with the Postal Service to design, develop and test a NGDV that fits our current and future needs.