

Vehicle news and updates



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In December 2022, the Postal Service announced its plan to acquire 106,000 delivery vehicles, replacing nearly half of its 220,000-vehicle fleet. Unfortunately, there have been recent efforts on Capitol Hill threatening to withdraw previously approved funding made available through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 that is needed to acquire and support these newer vehicles. So far, these efforts have not been successful, and USPS plans to acquire new vehicles appear to be unchanged.

According to the plan, USPS will purchase 60,000 of the recently developed Next Generation Delivery Vehicles (NGDV) from Oshkosh Defense. The remaining 46,000 vehicles in this plan will be commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) vehicles purchased from other manufacturers. Deployment of the NGDV to delivery units across the country began in June of 2024 and continues today. Meanwhile, USPS has been conducting pilot tests evaluating the performance of various other vehicle models when used for delivery operations. One vehicle that has completed the USPS evaluation process is the Ford E-Transit van and, in March of 2023, USPS ordered 9,250 of them for the delivery fleet.

Over the years, I have monitored pilot tests conducted by the Postal Service on various vehicle models being considered for purchase, including the Ford E-Transit. My department has examined each test model, collected feedback from letter carriers involved with the tests and met with USPS and vehicle manufacturer representatives to discuss the vehicles. This month, I will provide the latest information on several of the pilot tests that have ended recently.

Canoo Lifestyle Delivery Vehicle 190



LDV 190 is one of the few right-hand drive vehicles tested by USPS. The battery electric vehicle (BEV) has a unique design and many features that pilot participants enjoyed. Specifically, carriers liked the cabin area's modern design, including its open dashboard area with additional windows which en-

In May of 2024, the Postal Service began testing the use of the Canoo Lifestyle Delivery Vehicle (LDV) 190 at the South Atlanta Sorting and Delivery Center in Georgia. The Canoo

hanced visibility. Carriers also favored the cargo area's sliding shelves. Carriers suggested improvements for the vehicle as well, such as better lighting in the cabin area, ventilation tools in the cargo area and a need to reduce blind spots on the vehicle's roadside. Carriers also found it difficult to complete curbside delivery due to the height of the driver's-side window.

The Canoo LDV 190 pilot ended in November 2024. The vehicle manufacturer filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy and halted all operations in January of this year. While USPS owns the models used for the pilot, they will not purchase any additional Canoo vehicles. For more information on this pilot, read my November 2024 *Postal Record* column.

eBike

In August of 2021, USPS purchased two models of the Coaster Cycle Freightier electric bicycle (eBike) for testing on existing bicycle delivery routes at two Florida offices, Miami Beach and St. Petersburg. Testing of the eBikes was transferred to the Fredericksburg, VA, Post Office a year later in August 2022. Because the two routes being assigned the eBikes at the Fredericksburg office were not established bicycle routes, the line of travel for each assignment was changed and the delivery method was switched to park-and-loop prior to testing.



Carriers participating in the test received training from driver safety instructors and had to pass a test prior to operating the eBike. One benefit from the test that carriers reported was a reduction in time spent waiting for relay drivers to drop mail to them. Several negatives identified by pilot participants included difficulty starting and stopping the eBike on hills, vehicles passing too closely in traffic and inadequate parking.

Although the eBikes currently owned by USPS will remain in use, NALC was recently notified that testing has ended, and the electric bicycles will not become a part of the delivery fleet. For more information on the eBike pilot test, read my July 2023 *Postal Record* column.

USPS will continue its efforts to replace older model vehicles. I am expecting results from additional vehicle pilot tests that have recently ended, including the Mercedes Benz eSprinter Van and two models of the Morgan Olson C250 (Internal Combustion Engine) and eC250 (BEV). I want to thank each carrier involved in these tests. Their input and cooperation has a significant impact on our craft. I will continue to provide updates on all vehicle testing. Be sure to read my article each month and visit nalc.org for the latest information.