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County and Local Fleet Success Stories

How Three Fleet Managers Automated
Their Vehicle Sharing and Saved Big



 AgileFleet

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Interviews with Top City & County Fleet Managers

City of Stamford, CT

In two years, the City of Stamford, CT has reduced its fleet from 80 to 29 vehicles, saving the city an estimated \$560,000 in fleet costs, with a 5-year projected savings of more than \$1 million. The city also reports a cost avoidance savings of \$500,000 since automating their fleet management processes and using GPS technology together. The City of Stamford is the 3rd largest city in CT, with 130,000 people and growing. They maintain 1,100 pieces of equipment including trucks, cars, and sanitation and park equipment.

Q: What was the motivation for automating your fleet processes?

A: Even though no one wanted to share, the consensus was that we needed more vehicles. But every time I went to the Government Center, there were always 30-40 cars sitting, some with dust on the windshields. That told me they weren't being used, but we had no way to know for sure because we didn't collect utilization data or trip information.



**Former City of Stamford Fleet Manager
Mike Scacco**

Q: What were things like prior to implementing the fleet management information system and GPS?

A: Before implementing the solutions, our fleet situation was like a free for all. Departments were taking advantage of the system. I can remember one time 5 cars were all taken with single drivers to the same meeting 60 miles away. Some project managers would get a car, drive $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and keep it there all day, then return the car. Using a \$30K asset to drive 2.5 miles a week is not what I call good utilization. There was no accountability, no trip reports. When there was damage to the cars, we had no idea who was responsible. We needed to have accountability for our assets.

Q: What solutions have you deployed?

A: FleetCommander automates the management of our motor pool with online reservations and automated dispatching, and helps us manage keys and maintenance, and run reports. We use the GPS solution to gather data about our vehicle usage and driver behavior, and it is integrated with FleetCommander, which uses the GPS data to feed our reports. Both systems together have helped us reduce vehicles and provide better service to city employees.

Q: Have you had many objections to using the system?

A: The city has a training policy for anyone that uses a city vehicle or equipment (including unions since most people are union). We explain that we are not using these systems to reprimand or find fault with people, we are using them to collect data. In the beginning there was pushback, but now every department has a vehicle when they need it, which they didn't have before, and the majority have a better vehicle and more choices for vehicle types. And, on certain occasions, a vehicle can be used multiple times per day. Now the people are comfortable with it and love the system.



Q: What cost savings and efficiencies have you achieved?

A: Within one year, we reduced our fleet from 80 to 29 vehicles. (Savings are estimated at about \$3,000-\$5,000/year per vehicle in maintenance, insurance, and other costs.) Our savings adds up to about \$300,000. Replacement costs are also a consideration. If you are paying \$18K-\$25K per vehicle and you reduce 29 cars, you are saving \$500,000 in replacement costs. We also have less liability. We have saved the city a tremendous amount of money and now vehicle utilization is where it should be. We believe that data is the key to our success. Now we are getting accurate mileage. Every time someone returns a vehicle, they can report any mechanical issues, which lets us be proactive with maintenance. We are now also able to track our idle time. We correlate an hour of idle time with one gallon of fuel to calculate fuel usage and identify ways to reduce waste. We can now make educated decisions on our pool fleet, and managers can make educated decisions on routing, scheduling, and for employee reviews. Now, supervisors are aware of driver behavior, speeding, how many stops they took, how long, etc. We now have full accountability. This program has been a godsend and we plan to expand to other city-used vehicles as well.

By the numbers:
Adding Up Stamford's Savings

51

Vehicles removed from the fleet, which was reduced from 80 to 29

\$204K

Amount collected in one-time disposal income

\$175K

Annual savings in maintenance and carrying costs

"This program has been a godsend and we plan to expand to other city-used vehicles as well."

Prince George's County, MD

Prince George's County fleet expert and Certified Automotive Fleet Manager (CAFM) Rick Hilmer has worked in county fleet management since 1994. Prior to the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, the Prince George's County Fleet Management Division had oversight of 3,500 light vehicles, which included both public safety and public service vehicles.

Q: Tell us about the Prince George's County fleet and motor pool.

A: The Fleet Management Division is responsible for approximately 3,500 light vehicles owned by the County. About 2,900 of those are public safety vehicles; Police, Fire, Sheriff and Corrections. The other 600 are public service vehicles, most of which are assigned. This is the portion of the fleet where we are looking for pooling opportunities. Some of the agencies operate internal pools but Fleet has two pools consisting of 56 vehicles serving over 120 users. Fleet pool vehicles are both on long term as well as daily rentals. Fleet Commander allows us to manage the pooled vehicles and ensure accurate tracking, maintenance, and billing.



**Prince George's County's
Rick Hilmer , CAFM**



Q: What are the top five objections you have heard from people to sharing vehicles?

A: Top 5 objections to vehicle sharing are:

- I need my car every day.
- When I need a car, I can't afford to try and find one.
- My car is my office.
- We don't have enough cars as it is.
- No one else will take care of the cars.

Q: How do you answer those objections?

A: With facts and data. Not every vehicle can be shared, but you can analyze the data and find the places where they would fit. You must show people the usage patterns that lend themselves to pooling / sharing options and show agencies where they will save money.

Q: How do you let people know that sharing vehicles can be better?

A: We showed them the money they would save by not having to pay an annual fee for car ownership. For example, we showed one department that their projected motor pool usage for a year would be covered by the savings generated from just one of the six cars turned in. The rest of the money could be reallocated to other departmental priorities. To show them we were serious, and we were invested, we gave them their money back even though we were halfway through the fiscal year. The other selling factor was that the cars in the pool are a tremendous upgrade over what they had and turned in; newer, better, more functional, more environmentally friendly, more comfortable and all at a lower cost. That kind of deal sells itself. We had to deliver what we promised; better cars at a lower price with a positive customer experience through the reservation/kiosk system. If our performance couldn't match or beat their expectations, it wasn't going to work.

Q: What factors contributed to the creation of a second motor pool?

A: We wanted a signature project to demonstrate fuel and emissions reductions in partnership with the Maryland Energy Administration. We wanted it to be a multi-disciplined approach that integrated fleet reduction, car sharing and electrification, so we created a motor pool which consists of Plug-In Hybrid Electric vehicles shared by multiple agencies all of which are controlled by Agile FleetCommander. We used county and state funds and have implemented a successful project which we believe can be replicated at other sites going forward.

Q: Describe the transition to managing multiple sites.

A: The biggest concern was geography. We were opening second site ten miles away from the original site but weren't adding any additional staff to manage it. For the most part, we have been able to manage everything through Fleet Commander but do have a backup person trained who is physically closer to the new site and who is occasionally called on to respond to a problem there. The need for him to respond has been minimal.

Rick Hilmer, on handling driver objections to motor pool:

...[you do it] with facts and data. Not every vehicle can be shared, but you can analyze the data and find the places where they would fit. You must show people the usage patterns that lend themselves to pooling / sharing options and show agencies where they will save money.



Q: How has vehicle utilization improved and how much money have you saved?

A: The two agencies currently enrolled are each saving \$ 15,000 - \$ 20,000 per year depending on the price of fuel. The new cars are much more efficient and have lower operating costs. We removed 12 underutilized vehicles from the fleet and have been able to pool 31 users to share the 6 cars we put in the pool. We believe the envelope can be pushed a little further on these 6 cars as we have only had several occasions where all the cars were out at the same time but have yet to turn down a request. If we can successfully add another agency to the pool, we'll reduce their owned fleet, add their employees and could add a vehicle or two back to the pool to match the increased demand. That's the beauty of using the Fleet Commander system. You can track your usage and adjust based on data. Our first few months we were averaging 40 trips a month and now we're up to 80. We have slowly added users as requested.

Forsyth County, NC

Forsyth County implemented automated vehicle sharing technology that facilitated a dramatic reduction in its fleet size and a massive cut to personal mileage reimbursements while still meeting all its needs for safe, reliable vehicles. To date, the relatively simple change in business practices has saved the taxpayers of the county money while delivering other big benefits to county employees. The changes have helped introduce safer, greener vehicles to the fleet, which created great reductions in the county's carbon footprint. Drivers now have access to newer vehicles and more types of vehicles in the shared motor pools.

Kevin Rogers, the county's fleet manager, said, "In 2008, every county organization was being asked to cut costs. When the fleet was analyzed, the first thing that struck us was that we had very limited data to measure fleet utilization. When we'd look in the parking lot, we thought we had a utilization problem, but we lacked the metrics to prove it. We knew that if we could clearly understand our fleet utilization situation and we could efficiently share vehicles, we could eliminate underused vehicles. The key was to have vehicles available when we removed an assigned or otherwise underused vehicle."

By increasing utilization through vehicle sharing, underutilized vehicles could be eliminated. So, that's exactly what Forsyth County did.

The technology was easy to implement. In only 100 days, Forsyth County implemented an automated vehicle sharing initiative to help right-size its fleet. The new technology, which consisted of an online vehicle reservation system and self-service vehicle kiosks for picking up and returning vehicles 24/7, was an instant success. The system enabled the county to immediately eliminate 30 vehicles. From those initial cuts alone, the county has realized a substantial savings annually due to the elimination of depreciation, maintenance, administrative and other costs associated with those vehicles.

Rogers said working with the budget office making a business case for spending money on vehicle sharing technology was one of the easier cases to make.



**Forsyth County Fleet Manager
Kevin Rogers**

Before our motor pool implementation, our yearly expenditure for POV was approximately \$125,000. We cut it to approximately \$57,000. I hadn't anticipated that.

-Kevin Rogers



“It’s one of those rare cash-positive projects. When we began the process, we estimated we could eliminate at least 30 vehicles in the first year if we had an efficient way for county employees to share rather than having vehicles assigned to individuals or departments. We achieved that goal. Additionally, we would generate revenue by selling unused vehicles,” said Rogers, adding in less than one year, all expectations were exceeded relative to cost savings.

Some other benefits of vehicles sharing technology were a surprise. The county soon realized the vehicle sharing technology gave easy access to county employees, who previously had to use personal vehicles to perform their jobs. County policy was implemented that required employees to use shared, pooled vehicles instead of their personal vehicles for official business as much as possible. This helped the county to reduce reimbursements to employees who used personally owned vehicles, or POVs, for county business by more than 50%, saving another \$60,000-plus per year. Using a county vehicle is roughly 35% cheaper than reimbursing an employee for using their vehicle.

Rogers said, “Before our motor pool implementation, our yearly expenditure for POV was approximately \$125,000. We cut it to approximately \$57,000. I hadn’t anticipated that.”

In 2018, Rogers was named Professional Manager of the Year for a public fleet by the American Public Works Association, which recognized him for his outstanding performance managing the county’s maintenance operations, monitoring fleet maintenance costs, purchasing vehicles and equipment, advising other departments of potential replacements, all while maintaining best practices in the areas of rightsizing and efficiency. APWA also recognized Rogers’ efforts researching new technologies and serving on committees in the county to further improve the efficiencies and safety of the employees.

Forsyth County expanded the use of motor pools and automated the entire vehicle sharing process using the Agile Fleet fleet management information system, or FMIS, over the coming years. “When we first started to try to share vehicles without modern technology, we shared 25 vehicles. It took two people to manage the process because everything was all manual — reservations were handwritten on spreadsheets,” Rogers said. “We handed out and collected keys manually. Drivers had to come to our facility during business hours to get keys and we had a staff member dedicated to handling it.” Now it is all automated, and vehicles are available 24/7.

Additional Efficiencies Achieved by Forsyth County

In addition to the motor pool capabilities, Forsyth County fleet managers are using FleetCommander for asset management, driver management, policy enforcement, reporting, communication with fleet drivers, and more. Other efficiencies realized by Forsyth County include:

- Replacing labor-intensive, paper-based vehicle request processes with online reservation forms.
- Communicating and enforcing the county's fleet policies automatically using the online request capabilities.
- 24x7 access to vehicles at motor pool locations using self-service kiosks and secure automated key systems.
- Utilizing real-time, automatically updating fleet dashboards to alert staff of ways to reallocate vehicles or reduce fleet size.

Ready for the next step?

Schedule a consultation with our team of fleet experts. We'd love to learn more about your specific needs. We can provide a 10-year fleet savings assessment, provide a demo, and share stories of how we've helped other social services organizations. Scan the QR code to get started!

