

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bucks County Commissioners
Fm: David Sanko, Chief Operating Officer
Date: September 2, 2008
Subj: County Vehicle Report

Overview

Bucks County is a Class 2A county in the Commonwealth of PA with a population in excess of 620,000. Among the 6 largest counties in PA, Bucks County has the smallest fleet of vehicles despite being 4th in population. Bucks County also has the smallest fleet of all the class 2A counties at 245 vehicles. Montgomery County (2A) has slightly over 300 and Delaware County (2A) has 315 vehicles. Philadelphia as a Class 1 county has over 6,500 and Allegheny County as a Class 2 county has 700 vehicles. By comparison, our largest township, Bensalem Township, has over 200 vehicles.

Philadelphia has over 700 vehicles permanently assigned 24/7 (11% of fleet). It was previously reported that Bucks County has 57 permanently assigned vehicles with the Chief Operating Officer having access to an additional fleet vehicle 24/7 (varies dependent on mission/project and not permanently assigned). All have assigned public safety/law enforcement related functions except the 8 vehicles in public works/parks.

While only tasked with gathering justifications for the 24 non-law enforcement vehicles, justifications were collected on all. During this review, the Sheriff identified an additional 15 vehicles regionally assigned to teams that allow for a more efficient deployment of manpower (and reduced overtime). This brings the new total to 72 with the sheriff having 21 units.

*Detectives	16	
*Park Rangers	11	
*Sheriff	6	+15
Corrections	8	
Public Works/Parks	8	
Emergency Mgmt	5	
** Juvenile Probation	3	
	<u>57</u>	72

* Law Enforcement

** Courts

Recommendations

County detectives have vehicles assigned as law enforcement and as an order of arbitration. Sheriffs and Park Rangers are covered under a "law enforcement exception" as sworn officers. Some ranger vehicles are housed on county property at night where rangers live in parks. While many would argue that Corrections staff is part of law enforcement, they have been separated for purposes of this report as they are not "sworn Act 111 officers" with arrest powers. Juvenile Probation is part of the Court System. Accordingly, my recommendations are limited to the Departments of Corrections, Public Works/Parks and Emergency Management.

Corrections	8
Public Works/Parks	8
Emerg. Mgmt	<u>5</u>
	21

Utilizing best practices from similar sized counties, it seems standard that law enforcement vehicles, vehicles used for emergency response, and certain contractual senior managers are assigned 24/7 vehicles. Emergencies shall be considered calls for immediate response to a situation where failure to quickly respond will result in a life-threatening situation, serious property damage, or a significant disruption to major county services. As it relates to continued 24/7 assignment of vehicles, I would offer the following recommendations:

- **Corrections:** The Director of Corrections maintains 24/7 access to an assigned vehicle due to SWAT "call-outs" as well as required special duties and equipment needs. This is further supported by miles driven and average number of monthly "call-outs" All others would have access to a county vehicle per usage policy with overnights approved as needed by supervisors. These vehicles may be pre-positioned at various secure county properties nearest the home of the employee.
- **Public Works/Parks:** Recognizing that it is not desirable to use personal vehicles at construction sites or various off-road locations, a small fleet of vehicles shall be maintained for use by senior managers/appropriate staff for the day-to-day performance of their duties. These vehicles may be pre-positioned at various secure county properties nearest the home of the employee.
- **Emergency Management:** The 24/7 assignment of vehicles for the Director of Emergency Management, Hazmat Team Leader, and Fire Marshals' office are all justified as first response vehicles. In addition, the need for specialty equipment, including communications equipment offers further validity.

I make no recommendation for COO access to a vehicle as it is a contractual “tool” that allows maximum performance of duties and efficiencies in scheduling. In the future, one option could be a vehicle “allowance” as has been adopted by some municipalities. This obviously would be an item for future contract review.

Overall Objectives

- When it is in the best interest of the County, transportation is to be provided to individuals to assure efficient and effective delivery of services.
- Minimize the number of vehicles in the fleet without jeopardizing the delivery of services.
- Educate all County vehicle drivers of their responsibilities to professionally handle the use of County vehicles.

Summary

Most counties in Pennsylvania operate their fleets in a decentralized manner at the departmental level. While this allows for maximum amount of mission specific oversight, it does not lend itself to systemic standardizations and efficiencies.

Some counties have opted to delay purchasing new vehicles as a means of saving money. A cost benefit (commonsense) review of this suggests that the cost of maintaining an aging, inefficient fleet often well exceeds the price of a newer, leaner, more fuel efficiency fleet.

In another demonstration of Bucks County’s ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and improving efficiency and effectiveness in an economical manner, the following additional recommendations are offered and would serve as a model for other counties:

- The hiring of a fleet manager to oversee standardization of procedures regarding assignment, maintenance and replacement of vehicles.
- Establish clearer standardized guidelines for usage, including random drug testing, background checks and PA Motor Vehicle Code compliance within 60 days of hire.
- Purchase of fleet management software for electronic recordkeeping on warranty, mileage, maintenance and other service records including monthly vehicle logs.

- Continued adherence to **BEGIN Committee** recommendations relative to fuel efficiency when purchasing or replacing vehicles...and expand recommendations to include special fuel savings features.
- Explore leasing rather than purchasing where practical.
- Centralize inspections (including emissions), maintenance and service "in house" rather than outsourcing. This will require a significant capital investment in equipment and facilities as well as additional manpower.
- Supplement additional manpower with community service/work release inmate labor for regular maintenance, washing, detailing and decal applications.
- Additional supplemental workforce using County Technical/Trade School students to assist with maintenance and repair work through internships or work/study options.
- All new purchase/replacement vehicles must meet justifications through budget process and be approved by the fleet manager. Further, vehicle size and type should be standardized to meet mission of use by department (for specialty vehicles) i.e. 4-cylinder where practical and vehicle size to correspond to functional usage.
- Establish standards for replacement of vehicles based on age and overall mileage.
- The establishment of a "pool" of vehicles for defined official county usage available to all qualifying departments and administered by the fleet manager.
- Repairs should be the responsibility of the department where vehicle is permanently assigned. Repairs as a result of any abuse/unauthorized use of county vehicle shall be the sole responsibility of the operator.
- Any moving violations or traffic/parking citations shall be the responsibility of the operator. Excessive motor vehicle violations may make operator ineligible to drive a County vehicle.

- Only vehicle operators in good standing with applicable motor vehicles laws can access a county vehicle or be reimbursed for mileage for usage of a personal vehicle for county business.
- Implement a “branding” strategy clearly identifying county vehicles all being same which would include standardizing color of fleet (and repainting all existing vehicles).
- Explore partnering with private sector by selling advertising on vehicles to defer cost to taxpayers.
- All non-exempt vehicles to be clearly marked with a county seal and “Official Use Only” decal.
- Vehicle usage standards to be reviewed annually to include “call-out” thresholds and total mileage as well as restricting 24/7 commutes to “in county” only, unless otherwise approved by County Administration.
- Urge the County Controller to review and comply with appropriate IRS reporting relative to commuting mileage as a taxable benefit to 24/7 users.
- Given the size of the county, travel requirements and demands of the job, assign a vehicle 24/7 to each County Commissioner.
- Standardize to a common platform and upgrade the fuel tracking system to be managed by the fleet manager and audited by the County Controller.

These recommendations, upon approved, would constitute a baseline of vehicle policies to be added to the existing policies and may further be supplemented by additional recommendations of the fleet manager.

I have attached the original 24/7 vehicle justifications (as submitted) with the exception of county detectives which are contractual.

As always, I remain available to provide any additional information as needed.