

# Next Generation Delivery Vehicle



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Since the beginning of the 20th century, the Postal Service has relied on many different vehicles to move and deliver the nation's mail. One of the first motorized vehicles was an electric automobile used to transport mail from the Buffalo, NY, Post Office to the Pan-American Exhibition held in that city from May through October of 1901.

Throughout the 20th century, numerous vehicles were used both for mail transportation and delivery. These included cars, trucks, bicycles and horse-drawn wagons. One thing most of the vehicles had in common was the fact that they were cars produced for other reasons and not built specifically for mail delivery.



Electric car (Courtesy of the Smithsonian Postal Museum)

One exception was the Mailster, a three-wheeled vehicle produced during the 1950s for the Post Office Department.

While almost a third of the delivery fleet would be comprised of Mailsters by the 1960s, the design of the vehicle made it unsuitable for use in colder climates.

There also were safety concerns, due to its tendency to tip over when making hard left and right turns. Coinciding with the deployment of the Mailster in the 1950s was the introduction of the Jeep on city delivery routes. This iconic vehicle was a variation of the Jeep used by the U.S. armed forces immediately before World War II.



Mailster (Courtesy of the Smithsonian Postal Museum)



Jeep (Courtesy of the Smithsonian Postal Museum)

The Postal Service's first large-scale project to acquire a vehicle specifically meant for mail delivery began in the 1980s when it solicited companies to submit design ideas. Ultimately, three manufacturers designed and built



Long Life Vehicle (Courtesy of the Smithsonian Postal Museum)

prototype vehicles for testing by the Postal Service. In 1985, the three prototypes built by Grumman and General Motors, Poveco (a partnership between Fruehauf and General Automotive Corporation) and American Motors were tested in Laredo, TX. Following these tests, the Postal Service selected the vehicle built by Grumman and General Motors, and the Long Life Vehicle (LLV) was born. In 1986, the first LLV was produced and from 1987 to 1994, more than 140,000 LLVs were built and delivered to the Postal Service. Though the LLV was intended to be used for only 20 years, it has been the main delivery vehicle used by city letter carriers around the country for almost 40 years, living up to its name. Currently, there are more than 135,000 LLVs being used on both city and rural delivery routes.

The next vehicle designed specifically for mail delivery was the Flex-Fuel Vehicle (FFV). This vehicle was built by Ford and Utilimaster and around 22,000 were deployed in 2000 and 2001.

On June 3, the future of city delivery began with the production and deployment of the Next Generation of Delivery Vehicle (NGDV). The development of the NGDV has been a long road that started back in 2014 when the Postal Service asked the NALC for its input on designing a delivery vehicle to replace the aging fleet of LLVs.

Just as when the LLV was being planned, the Postal Service solicited manufacturers to submit design ideas for the NGDV. This time around, six companies were selected to build prototype vehicles based on the criteria issued by USPS. The manufacturers chosen were Oshkosh/Ford, Mahindra, VT Hackney/Workhorse, Karsan and AM General. When testing began, vehicles from each company were subjected to various tests, including on-street delivery by letter carriers from around the country. After all testing was complete, the Postal Service awarded the contract to build the NGDV to Oshkosh Defense, which is a contractor with an extensive history of building purpose-built vehicles.

After the contract was awarded in February of 2021, Oshkosh built a prototype vehicle according to the design specifications laid out by the Postal Service. In July of that year, a group of 20 letter carriers from various parts of the country traveled to Oshkosh, WI, to review the NGDV.

After reviewing the vehicle, each one sat down with the group of engineers from both the Postal Service and Oshkosh Defense to give their opinion of the vehicle. They also offered suggestions to improve the NGDV, based on their knowledge of mail delivery and their experience driving the LLV and FFV. Based on this feedback, the Postal Service and Oshkosh made several changes to improve the vehicle. These modifications not only helped improve the safety of the vehicle, but they also had a positive impact on the comfort of the letter carriers who will operate the NGDV.

The changes in the cab area of the vehicle include an improved driver's-side door window handle to make it more comfortable to open and close the window; the addition of a third window shade to bridge the gap between the two shades on the right and left of the windshield; and the movement of the driver's-side seat controls from the left to the right of the seat, which allows letter carriers to adjust the seat while standing outside of the vehicle when necessary. In the cargo area, these changes include the addition of a long handle on the inside of the curb-side cargo door to aid in the opening and closing of the door; the addition of a strap on the inside of the rear cargo door to make it easier to open from the cargo area; and, the redesign of the locking mechanism for the shelves in the cargo area to make them similar to the shelves in the Promaster van. Between the cab and cargo areas, the position of the partition door between the cab and cargo areas has been reconfigured. Originally, the opening of this door was situated behind the driver's seat. Now, the opening is behind the mail trays in the cab area, to make it easier for letter carriers to move mail trays from the back of the NGDV. Other improvements based on the feedback from letter carriers



include the addition of anti-slip material to the surface of the footwells located at the driver's-side and curb-side doors; the addition of a "porch light" above the driver's-side window to help illuminate the area around curb-side boxes during low light conditions; and the redesign of the rear lights to replicate the lights on the LLV.

As 2024 continues, more NGDVs will be produced at the Oshkosh manufacturing plant in Spartanburg, SC. As of now, the Postal Service plans to purchase at least 60,000 NGDVs for implementation across the country. Of this total, 45,000 will be battery electric vehicles while the remainder will be operated by an internal combustion engine. Both variants will be a mixture of front-wheel and all-wheel drive; however, the exact numbers of each are not known as of right now.

Once the NGDVs are produced and delivered to the Postal Service, they will be deployed throughout the delivery network. Though the deployment schedule has not yet been announced by the Postal Service, the current plan is to have all 60,000 NGDVs produced and deployed within the next six years.

**As NALC learns more about which offices and routes will receive the NGDV, we will keep the membership posted on the NALC website and through articles in *The Postal Record*.**

## Medical evidence (continued)

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for in determining whether or not a medical opinion is well rationalized:

[The] explanation and discussion are what constitute medical 'reasoning' or 'rationale.' Sufficient objective data (findings on examination, test results, etc.) should be present so that a reviewer can determine on what specific evidence the medical conclusions were based. A well-reasoned medical

opinion should also be consistent with the findings upon examination. Findings may be noted during physical examination, laboratory testing, and diagnostic procedures. Sufficient objective data (findings on examination, test results) should be included in the report to support the medical conclusions.

**Next month's column will continue the discussion of the criteria CEs employ when weighing one medical report against another.**