

First Article Test and Welcome to USPS



Christopher Jackson

In December, the Postal Service issued an updated Record of Decision for Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV) acquisitions. To replace existing delivery vehicles nationwide that have reached the end of their service life, the Postal Service has determined that it will implement the Preferred Alternative presented in its Sept. 29, 2023, Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. The Preferred Alternative is to purchase and deploy a mixed fleet of 106,480 NGDV and commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) vehicles over six years, with a battery electric vehicle (BEV) commitment of 62 percent. In this month's column, I will provide an update on one

of the COTS vehicles the Postal Service is looking to use in its delivery fleet and to discuss a recent notice concerning new employee orientation.

First Article Test of the Ford E-Transit: The Ford E-Transit is a left-hand drive BEV best suited for park-and-loop routes and parcel delivery. The Postal Service began testing the use of the vehicle with letter carriers in September 2022 at the Vienna Post Office in Vienna, VA. The Ford E-Transit is equipped with many modern features that are found in today's passenger vehicles. More information on Ford E-Transit features and the 2022 pilot test can be found in my column in the January 2023 issue of *The Postal Record*.



In January, the Postal Service conducted a First Article Test (FAT) and inspection of the Ford E-Transit vehicle in Romeo, MI. My staff and I attended this FAT and inspection

event at the Michigan Proving Grounds with representatives from the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA), Vehicle Maintenance staff from the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and personnel representing several departments at USPS Headquarters. We were introduced to the good people at the Ford Company and shown many miles of roads containing course conditions designed to test the durability of the Ford E-Transit and other vehicles that it produces.

Weather conditions were wintry during the FAT and inspection. Snow started falling early that morning and later

turned to rain. My staff and I had the opportunity to observe several road, acceleration, brake and water spray tests conducted on the Ford E-Transit. We spent time inspecting the vehicle while it was parked inside the facility, and eventually we performed our own test drive around the grounds with Ford personnel riding along to answer questions. The vehicle handled the weather and road conditions very well in our experience.



Later, we participated in a group discussion to provide the Postal Service with feedback and suggestions. Some of the issues identified in the discussion focused on the potential for the steps leading into the curbside sliding door of the cargo area to become a slipping hazard in snowy and rainy conditions, the height of the cargo area for taller individuals, and the comfort level of the passenger-side jump seat due to a safety bolster installed between the seat and the vehicle door.

Welcome to the USPS (W2USPS): In late December, the Postal Service sent notification that it would be updating the format in which the Welcome to the USPS (W2USPS) New Employee Orientation Curriculum is delivered. Under the new format, orientation content will be provided via a series of pre-recorded videos. All newly hired employees represented by NALC, APWU, NRLCA and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union will receive orientation simultaneously. Each union will continue to be allotted time to address new employees in their respective crafts. Local facilitators from Field Human Resources will be on site to play the videos, answer questions, administer the Oath of Office, and ensure that onboarding documentation is completed.

The Postal Service states that the format change helps to ensure consistent messaging and allows districts to schedule orientation based on their local time zone. Providing districts with the ability to schedule orientation based on their local time zone is useful, since personnel on opposite coasts of the country have identified difficulties in participating in the virtual classes simultaneously. My staff and I are currently discussing the updated orientation materials with the Postal Service to ensure that it is in compliance with our National Agreement and postal handbook and manual provisions.

As always, I will continue to monitor these matters and provide the membership with updates. Be sure to read my monthly column and visit the City Delivery page on the NALC website for all the latest news on city delivery activities.