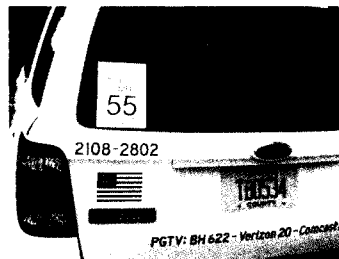


Polk Board of County Commissioners

**2011 Better Government Competition
Submittal**



Submitted by:

Bob Stanton – Director/Fleet Management
Polk County Board of County Commissioners
P. O. Box 9005 Drawer AS03
Bartow, Fl. 33831
863/534-5660
863/534-0390 (fax)
bobstanton@polk-county.net

**2011 BETTER GOVERNMENT COMPETITION
ENTRY SUBMITTAL from POLK COUNTY BoCC, FL.
February 25, 2011**

1. Polk County's Transformative Response to High Fuel Costs
2. Agency: Fleet Management Division – Polk County Board of County Commissioners
3. Contact: Bob Stanton – Director – Fleet Management Division
4. Address: P. O. Box 9005 Drawer AS03, Bartow, FL. 33831
5. Phone: 863/534-5660 (office) 863/599-8424 (cell) 863/534-0390 (fax)
6. Email: bobstanton@polk-county.net
7. On February 17, 2008, fuel prices began a steady and meteoric rise. By summer, the cost/gallon for both unleaded and diesel fuel exceeded \$4.00. Not having forecast or budgeted funding for such a dramatic increase during the last 6 months of the fiscal year, fuel costs were having a detrimental effect on the County's daily cost of operation with no end in sight. Polk County's 2,156 vehicles travel 14,400,000 miles annually. How can a local government, unable/unwilling to curtail citizen service, take fiscally responsible steps to reduce or mute the impact of fuel costs without reducing services to citizens? Unlike a private fleet, local government can't park their vehicles, adjust or combine routes, assess fuel adjustment charges or take other steps commonly employed by private fleets to ease fuel costs.

This submittal outlines Polk County, Florida's comprehensive and innovative response to high fuel costs, a coordinated County-wide response that reduced annual fuel consumption by 13%, (415,000 gallons), reduced accidents by 22% and reduced accident severity by 35% while costing the County *nothing*. This program can be easily replicated by fleets both public and private with similar results.

The Clean Air Act of 1992 encouraged the automotive, heavy truck, and motor fuel industries to concentrate on changes to and/or development of hardware and vehicle technology to reduce fuel consumption. Like many other fleet Polk had invested in some of those "hardware" solutions too.

This program however, turned the popular concepts of fuel conservation on their heads by concentrating on redirecting driver behavior as opposed to relying on technology or hardware. In spite of the statistical fact that 35% of a vehicle's fuel consumption is dependent on driver behavior, no program of which we were aware actually addressed driver behavior directly and proactively.

Polk's program was designed to modify driver behavior through retraining and by limiting travel speeds. It delivered more positive and tangible results than *any* alternative fuel program anywhere in the U.S. and at no cost to the County. Total savings over 26 months have totaled \$1,437,200 in hard dollars (fuel, damage etc.). The soft dollars saved in litigation or other expenses, while real, cannot be accurately estimated.

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8. Proposed solutions:

- **County Vehicle Travel Speeds were restricted to a maximum of 55mph on every County roadway except for Interstate 4;**

55 MPH Restriction Implementation Details:

Polk County's roadway network is characterized by an extensive system of County and Federal highways, few of which are limited access such as interstates, but feature speed limits of 65mph. The County's large geography (2,000 square miles) routinely requires that County employees travel long distances to perform their duties. Studies show that traveling at 65mph requires 15% more fuel than traveling at 55mph, the speed restriction was designed specifically to conserve fuel.

Prior to implementing the restriction, the County consulted with both the Florida Highway Patrol and the County Sheriff to assure this restriction, if implemented, would not place County employees or the motoring public at risk. Both agencies favorably endorsed our action.

Polk County's greatest strengths is the quality of its employees. Once they understood why, we expected the majority of our employees to comply with the speed restriction. A decal was affixed to the rear of our vehicles to alert our citizens we were engaged in an extraordinary measure to save money. The County expected to monitor compliance in two ways. First, travel speeds could be monitored remotely utilizing the GPS devices installed on Polk's vehicle and second, employees self-policed their behavior through peer pressure and friendly competition.

- **An in-house Eco-Driver Training Program was initiated to teach fuel conservation driving techniques to County drivers;**

"Googling" the term Eco Driving will return page after page of Eco-Driving resources showing how companies worldwide have embraced the techniques and trained their employees to use them.

Instead Polk worked with Ford Motor Company to modify their on-line interactive program for teenage drivers called "Driving Skills for Life". With their assistance, we tailored it specifically to Polk County using our data on fuel consumption and driver behavior by creating a Power Point driver training presentation. By using Polk County data derived from our existing GPS equipped vehicles (536 units) regarding speed history, idle time history, and vehicle productivity, the presentation offered real world and locally accurate data and history which personalized the program to Polk County making it more interesting and relevant to the trainees. The classes were conducted in multiple locations for employee convenience. Classes typically lasted an hour and were routinely scheduled around the employees' work schedules, minimizing workplace disruption while underscoring management's commitment to the importance of this training.

Currently over 1500 drivers have received the training, which continues on a monthly basis.

- **An employee incentive program was implemented to reward individual employee drivers for increasing miles per gallon performance in the County vehicles they operated;**

As a companion to the Eco Driver training, employees wishing to participate in the incentive program sign a one page “contract” for a one year term. The employee agrees to observe Eco Driving techniques, to present his vehicle for maintenance on time, to enter correct odometer readings at our fuel islands, and to drive safely (no preventable crashes). In the contract, the County agreed to monitor driver’s miles per gallon results and if mpg increased beyond 5% of the base MPG, the fuel savings would be split with the employee 50/50, based on the average fuel cost over the one year term of the contract. The funds for the payout were taken from the actual savings. Since the savings weren’t specifically planned or budgeted, the savings realized from the mpg improvement became the origin of the incentive payouts essentially costing the County nothing. No MPG improvement beyond 5%, no incentive award was granted.

After the one year term of the incentive program, most participants received an incentive payout of less than \$100. However, participants who fully embraced the techniques saw significant gains in mpg. One employee received a \$457.00 payout! The incentive program lasts for one year only for each participant and cannot be repeated. We feel the modified eco-driving techniques learned and practiced over one year will be imprinted into their driving habits and continuing to provide benefits in both fuel conservation and safer vehicle operation.

- 9. Start up Costs: \$0
- 10. Funding? The training program was developed by the Fleet Management Director on his own time. Ford’s assistance was provided at no cost. The funding for the incentive payouts is covered within each department’s fuel budget. Since they don’t budget for the actual savings, the savings that result from the program are already covered within each department’s original funding and budget.
- 11. Positive Outcomes?

Fuel Savings:

After only the first 20 months, the Program resulted in the following:

- 13% Reduction in Annual Gallons Consumed
- 415,000 Gallons Saved
- \$1,112,200 Saved @ \$2.68 avg. cost/gallon
- 8 million lbs. of Carbon emissions avoided

Safety Benefits:

Among the Fuel Incentive contract stipulations was that a participating employee could not be involved in a preventable vehicle accident. If they were involved in a preventable crash, they were removed from the program. Our safety results were as follows:

- Accident Frequency reduced 22% - By driving more slowly and carefully, the County's vehicle accident frequency dropped 22% compared to the same time period the previous year. Savings: \$138,000 (Hard dollars, does not include expenses avoided from litigation, injuries, or other soft costs that cannot be accurately estimated).
- Accident Severity reduced 35% - Of the crashes experienced, the severity measured in the amount of property damage fell by 35% over the previous year. Savings: \$187,000 in damage repair costs.
- Soft dollar savings resulting from such things as damage awards, personal injury claims and litigation cannot be accurately calculated although we know there surely are additional savings in costs avoided in these areas.

Adopted by Other Governments:

May 2009 – Polk County School Board adopted the 55mph Speed Restriction

Sept 2010- Florida Department of Transportation initiated an in-depth state-wide study to ascertain the feasibility of adopting Polk's program

12. Legislation Required? No.
13. Changes since Implementation? None
14. Applicable to Massachusetts?

Yes. This program can be applied in any government operation. The choice is whether to accept high fuel prices as a condition of doing business...or not. If a government accepts fuel prices on as is basis and takes no action its likely other services may suffer as funding is redirected to cover unbudgeted fuel costs.

The alternative action is Polk's approach and one that any government can adopt. Drivers have a significant effect on fuel efficiency. Regardless of the vehicle technology employed, be it hybrids, bio-fuels, other alternative fuels, etc., the driver will still represent the largest factor in the success of the technology, based solely on their driving habits. By equipping drivers with the training and techniques and restricting their speeds, any government will achieve positive fuel savings at significantly less cost than experienced from investing in technology. Without the drivers' cooperation, the technology will not deliver the result that fostered the investment decision.

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15. Future goals:

We intend to retain this program as it has now become an integral part of the County's culture. The results of the program are unmistakable and validate both its implementation and the benefits from retaining it in place.

We feel, with the program now in place for almost two years and with fuel prices escalating again we're better able to weather the next fuel crisis while still being good stewards for our citizens than ever before.

Respectfully submitted

**Robert C. Stanton
Director – Fleet Management
Polk County Board of County Commissioners
Bartow, Fl.
863/534-5660**