How Cobb County, Georgia Is Moving to Net Zero at a Fraction of the Cost

*Al Curtis, Director of Fleet Management in Cobb County, GA is using the latest technology to diversify his fleet and meet his sustainability goals*

As fleet managers, you are often looking for ways to maximize your budget while meeting the sustainability and environmental initiatives that have been laid out for you. And, with the limited options out there for fleets to reduce their carbon footprint, electric vehicles (EVs) are often the obvious option and tend to lead the charge. But are EVs really the best and most effective option for every situation? The answer may not be as straightforward as you think.

While you aim to maximize one of today’s most important mandates - your sustainability impact - you are usually left working to find the least compromising option for your fleet. Despite the numerous government incentives and local sustainability initiatives that promote certain technologies, you really need to take a step back and evaluate your vehicles and how you plan to use them. Too often fleet managers are left with limited options that aren’t the most cost-effective or practical for your entire fleet.

That’s why it’s important to evaluate your needs, weigh your options and use all the tools in your toolbox.

Al Curtis, Director of Fleet Management for Cobb County Georgia, did just that. For more than twenty years, Curtis has assessed the various needs of his fleet and has worked to diversify the alternative fuel options of his vehicles based on the cost and the intended use of the vehicle.

“Cobb County Fleet management started looking into ways to lower our carbon footprint and save county tax dollars in 2000,” Al Curtis said. “Initially, we partnered with Atlanta Gas Light to provide the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) infrastructure and added 40 fully-dedicated CNG cars and trucks into our fleet to demonstrate our commitment to this project. This was our first step into lowering our overall carbon footprint and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.”

That was over 20 years ago and over the last two decades Cobb County has introduced a variety of alternative fuel options for its fleet of vehicles. From switching to a soy-based biodiesel for its fleet, to installing propane conversion kits on police cars and trucks, to purchasing hybrids and EVs, to most recently integrating Ingevity’s NeuFuel platform and the use of renewable natural gas (RNG) for light-duty trucks. Cobb County is a leader in utilizing a variety of alternative fuels in its fleet to reduce their carbon footprint.

“The NeuFuel vehicle platform just seemed like a logical solution for us,” Curtis said. “We were able to leverage a
zero-carbon fuel in RNG, which is offered seamlessly within the NeuFuel vehicle platform. Additionally, using a renewable fuel source is optimal and impactful in so many ways - it’s better for the environment, moves us closer to net zero carbon emissions with a low-cost fuel, and has an infrastructure that is a fraction of the cost of CNG. The ANG fueling appliance taps directly into the commercial utility line serving our facility allowing our use of RNG at no incremental cost.”

Net Zero at a Fraction of the Cost
Ingevity Corp, an automotive and sustainability leader as a Tier 1 & 2 supplier to the US and global auto industry, harnessed its 40-years of expertise in activated carbon to develop and commercialize the NeuFuel technology. The activated carbon in Ingevity’s technology is sustainability manufactured using sawdust from the furniture-making process.

The activated carbon inside the NeuFuel tank condenses the natural gas into a liquid, densifying it and allowing the platform to operate at a lower pressure (900 psi) compared to higher pressure CNG (3,600 psi). This allows for convenient private fueling using a low-cost fueling appliance that can be installed anywhere with access to natural gas. It also eliminates the capital investment that typically costs hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars to build a CNG station. The result means that fleets of any size and location can tap into natural gas and ultraclean RNG to significantly reduce their carbon footprint and achieve near-zero emissions.

Additionally, the NeuFuel system is also a path for existing diesel vehicles, an attractive and economical selling point for many fleet owners. Eliminating the need to purchase a new truck or van in conjunction with the low-cost infrastructure required to get started, lowers the risk of entering the alternative fuel market and is immediately accessible for most fleets.

“We have spent the last 20 years researching alternative fuel vehicles and incorporating them into our fleets,” Curtis said. “It’s important to remember that it’s not a one-size-fits-all model for most fleets. You have to look at how you plan to use the vehicle, your current infrastructure and your budget. Ingevity’s NeuFuel is just another tool in our toolbox that allows us to further our sustainability goals as a county at an affordable cost for maximum benefit.”