

“Federal Electric Vehicle Fleet”
Committee on Oversight and Reform
10:00 AM, Tuesday, April 5
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)

I thank Chairwoman Maloney for holding today’s hearing on the U.S. Postal Service’s future vehicle fleet. Ensuring that fleet is comprised of electric vehicles has been a key priority for me since I started serving in Congress in 2008. In fact, among the first bills I introduced in Congress – and with the Oversight and Reform Committee – was the Postal Service Electric Motor Vehicle Act in May of 2010. Twelve years later, unfortunately, we are only slightly closer to a green Postal Service fleet. But as Co-chair of the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition, I remain committed to partnering with the President to realize his goal of running the federal fleet on 100% clean power.

The Postal Service operates more than 200,000 vehicles – roughly a third of the federal government’s total vehicle fleet. The average Postal Service vehicle is 28 years old and, in some cases, is in such disrepair that it may put the lives of postal workers in jeopardy.

In February 2021, the Postal Service, led by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, announced it awarded Oshkosh Defense a multi-billion-dollar contract to manufacture a fleet of Next Generation Delivery Vehicles – between 50,000 and 165,000 vehicles over 10 years.

There is no question that the Postal Service has to replace its obsolete fleet. It should also be no question that the Postal Service should do so with electric vehicles. A recent report by Inspector General Tammy Whitcomb, one of our witnesses today, confirms this. In her staff’s March 17, 2022 report, they found *quote* “several clear benefits of adopting electric vehicles into the postal delivery fleet, including improved sustainability and environmental impacts.” *endquote* The Office of Inspector General continued:

Electric vehicles are generally more mechanically reliable than gas-powered vehicles and would require less maintenance. Energy costs would be lower for electric vehicles, as using electricity to power an electric vehicle is cheaper than using gasoline.

More over, the report importantly concluded that electric vehicle technology was *quote* “generally capable of meeting the Postal Service’s needs” and “could save the Postal Service money in the long term.”

This moment is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take electric vehicle technology to the next level with the second- largest vehicle fleet in America. We must also ensure that these vehicles are built with union labor. If we miss this opportunity, we hamstring this nation’s efforts to pivot to a more sustainable economy built on climate-friendly, economical investments in infrastructure. The House of Representatives has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to support and invest in a green electric vehicle fleet for the Postal Service, including funding in both the Postal Service Improvement Act (H.R. 3077) and the Build Back Better Act – which

included \$6 billion to electrify the Postal Service fleet and \$3 billion for the General Services Administration's fleet.

Despite repeated efforts by the House and the Biden Administration to ensure the Postal Service invested in a green electric and zero-emission fleet, the Postal Service announced on February 23, 2022, that it planned to purchase a fleet comprised of 90% internal combustion engine vehicles. After massive efforts by Chairwoman Maloney and myself, the Biden Administration, and other outside stakeholders, DeJoy announced on March 24, that the Postal Service ordered its first tranche of vehicles on the Oshkosh contract: 50,000 vehicles at a cost of \$2.98 billion dollars—roughly 20% of which (10,019 vehicles) are electric. The other 39,981 vehicles are fossil fuel reliant internal combustion engine vehicles. DeJoy's investments in outdated, gas-guzzling vehicles is antediluvian and simply bad business.

The Postal Service vehicle fleet is among the most distinctive in the world. Its iconic red, white and blue trucks roam the country from congested cities to quiet rural towns. An all-electric fleet would deliver environmental benefits and help an emerging manufacturing sector *and* serve as a powerful symbol of an administration determined to catalyze the transition off of fossil fuels and a reliance on fickle oil prices fraught with foreign policy dilemmas.

Both the Environmental Protection Agency and the White House Council on Environmental Quality wrote to Mr. DeJoy on in February to say that the Postal Service had made the wrong decision to buy gasoline powered trucks based on a flawed environmental analysis.

My own investigation and oversight work includes letters to Oshkosh, the House Leadership, and to Postmaster General DeJoy to demand investment in electric vehicles crafted with union labor. I have requested that the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigate whether the Postal Service complied with the National Environmental Policy Act in the generation of its Economic Impact Study for the purchase of its vehicle fleet. I believe that work is underway. I have repeatedly supported legislation to both fund and require the purchase of an electric vehicle fleet, including in the Build Back Better Act, the Postal Service Improvement Act (H.R. 3077), and my own bill, the Green Postal Service Fleet Act of 2022, which would require the Postal Service to procure at least 75% EVs in each purchase made against the Oshkosh contract.

DeJoy's investment in a fleet that is only 20% electric vehicles is simply not enough. His decisions are antediluvian and anachronistic. We have reason to believe that the assumptions Mr. DeJoy is using to justify his investments in internal combustion engine vehicles fail to factor in fluctuations in gas prices and the lower upkeep and repair costs for electric vehicles.

In short, Mr. DeJoy appears to have cooked the Postal Service books to justify a multibillion dollar investment in outdated technologies that contribute to the destruction of our planet. We cannot and will not stand for it. I plan to work with the Chairwoman and my colleagues to prevent this moment from becoming an embarrassing missed opportunity to put our government at the forefront of green technology investments. I look forward to finding a way to

move my Green Postal Fleet Act, and I hope to find additional ways to ensure we have a robust, electrified Postal Service vehicle fleet that serves this nation.