

Statement for the Record of Senator Tom Carper  
House Oversight Hearing on “It’s Electric: Developing the Postal Service Fleet of the Future”  
April 5, 2022

Chairwoman Maloney and Ranking Member Comer,

Thank you for your leadership of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, and for holding a hearing today on the U.S. Postal Service’s procurement of its Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV). This is a topic of great importance to me.

The USPS accounts for roughly one-third of the federal fleet. There are currently 198,000 vehicles in the USPS inventory. The USPS Long Life vehicles, which most Americans would recognize as the vehicle their mail carrier uses to deliver mail 6 days a week, was meant to last 24 years. Many of these are now over 30 years old, costly to maintain, and more prone to breaking down. They also only average 8.2 mpg. The Next Generation Delivery vehicles are also likely to be used for decades to come, therefore the investment decisions that the USPS makes now will have significant implications for the climate emissions well into the future. I believe the USPS has a social and moral imperative to transition to zero-emissions vehicles on every route where it’s feasible to do so, and to use low-emission alternatives where that’s not feasible today. I have told that to the USPS leadership many times over the past several years.

The Fourth National Climate Assessment identifies the transportation sector as the top contributor to U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, in part due to the emissions from increasing volumes of freight via trucking. The U.S. must dramatically and urgently reduce transportation sector emissions in order to avoid the most calamitous impacts of climate change, and transportation electrification is the best opportunity to do so. Transportation electrification also has benefits that extend beyond climate change. Replacing diesel and gasoline fueled vehicles with zero-emission vehicles also significantly reduces smog, soot, and other toxic air pollutants that harm human health and well-being. Since the USPS fleet delivers to 160 million addresses nationwide, six days per week, this transition would therefore improve air quality in every zip code across the country. Moreover, the geopolitical risks and vulnerabilities posed by reliance on fossil fuels have never been so clear as they are today. The senseless, unprovoked war in Ukraine waged by Russia’s Vladimir Putin, and the resulting spike in oil prices, has underscored the urgency for the USPS to modernize their fleet with electric vehicles.

Although the USPS is a unique entity in that it is charged with generating revenues to cover operating costs, their investment in zero-emission electric delivery vehicles will help our nation achieve our climate goals, in addition to supporting other broad social, public health, and geopolitical objectives. These important public benefits merit additional financial support for the USPS investment. The President has called for investments in postal electric vehicles and associated infrastructure as part of his efforts to Build a Better America, and Congress should provide those resources.

Beyond the clear social and moral imperative for the USPS to transition to zero-emission vehicles, it is important to note that there are also long-term operational benefits and cost-

competitiveness reasons for this transition. The USPS Office of the Inspector General concluded as much in a March 2022 report and the Postmaster General himself acknowledged in a recent press release that increasing the USPS investment in electric vehicles makes good sense from and operational and financial perspective.<sup>1,2</sup> It is clear that other businesses in the parcel delivery service are prioritizing electric vehicles as a business decision. As Richard Smith, the FedEx President and CEO, has said: “Electrifying our pickup and delivery fleet is critically important and makes sense from a service and financial standpoint.”<sup>3</sup> This is as true for the USPS as it is for their competitors. Amazon has entered into agreement with electric vehicle maker Rivian to deliver 100,000 electric delivery trucks, and FedEx has pledged to become carbon-neutral by 2040 by purchasing tens of thousands of electric vans.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, instead of reducing the long-term operating costs for the USPS, their new contract will procure predominantly gasoline-powered vehicles, which will get just 8.6 miles per gallon, compared to their current fleetwide fuel economy of 8.2 miles per gallon. To put this shamefully small improvement in context, in the last fifteen years, the vehicle fuel efficiency standards for light-duty trucks have improved by more than thirty percent, and the average fuel economy for new light-duty trucks will exceed 40 miles per gallon in Model Year 2026. However, the new USPS delivery vehicles, which will exceed the weight limit to be considered light-duty trucks by only a single pound, will barely improve on the fuel economy of a fleet that is now over 25 years old.

One paramount concern has been the USPS reliance on potentially flawed assumptions that are embedded in the analysis of their contract. On February 2, 2022, the Environmental Protection Administration identified these same concerns in letter to the Postal Service regarding their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), stating that “critical features of the contract are not disclosed in the EIS, important data and economic assumptions are missing in the EIS, and the EIS failed to consider a single feasible alternative to the proposed action.”<sup>5</sup> In particular, the EIS failed to disclose how the USPS arrived at their estimate of the Total Cost of Ownership for their gasoline-powered vehicles compared to the battery-electric vehicles. Where assumptions and datapoints are disclosed in the EIS, in some cases they raise red flags. For instance, the USPS assumes that fuel costs would average \$2.20 for the next decade. You need only look at fuel prices today to see that this assumption is woefully flawed. In Fiscal Year 2020, the U.S. Postal Service’s delivery fleet consumed over 204 million gallons of gasoline and diesel, therefore the difference of several dollars per gallon will have enormous fiscal implications for their operating costs.

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<sup>1</sup> *Electric Delivery Vehicles and the Postal Service*, March 17, 2022. (online at <https://www.uspsoig.gov/document/electric-delivery-vehicles-and-postal-service>)

<sup>2</sup> *USPS Places Order for 50,000 Next Generation Delivery Vehicles; 10, 019 to be Electric*, March 24, 2022. (<https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2022/0324-usps-places-order-for-next-gen-delivery-vehicles-to-be-electric.htm>)

<sup>3</sup> Karen Weise and Neal E. Boudette “*Can Anyone Satisfy Amazon’s Crazying for Electric Vans*” NY Times January 18, 2022. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/18/technology/amazon-electric-vans.html>)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Vicki Arroyo, Associate Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to Jennifer Beiro-Réveillé, Senior Director of Environmental Affairs and Corporate Sustainability, U.S. Postal Service Feb. 2, 2022 (online at <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/epa-letter-usps/c3d0d76b005345e5/full.pdf>).

The USPS has been working on this Next Generation Delivery Vehicle contract for years, with the first solicitation for bids released in 2015. Since that time, battery and electric vehicle technologies and markets have undergone massive transformation and expansion. In particular, the medium and heavy-duty vehicle market has recently expanded rapidly. The number of models of zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty trucks has expanded from just 20 models available for purchase in the U.S. 2019, to 145 models available in 2021.<sup>6</sup> As this market continues to grow and the technology continues to mature, the availability of zero-emission alternatives will continue to expand and the costs for these vehicles will only fall further. It is not only appropriate for the USPS to carefully re-examine the assumptions that led to a contract for only 20 percent electric vehicles; it would be gross misconduct for them to fail to do so.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share these thoughts and concerns, I look forward to working with you to ensure that Congress takes the opportunity to support the electrification of the USPS vehicle fleet, so that we leave behind for future generations of Americans both a livable planet and a vibrant U.S. Postal Service.

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<sup>6</sup> Baha M. Al-Alawi, Owen MacDonnell, Ross McLane, and Kevin Walkowicz, *Zeroing in on Zero Emission Trucks*. January 2022 (online at <https://calstart.org/zeroing-in-on-zero-emission-trucks/>)