



PW-20

Utility vehicles join city fleet

The city of Weatherby Lake, Missouri (2,000), purchased two Kawasaki Mules for its fleet. These small utility vehicles have proved to be extremely versatile and cost effective.

Implementation notes

Leadership/staffing The public works director initially decided that a Mule would be a valuable addition to the city's fleet, and the city council agreed to the purchase.

Timeline The city bought its first Mule in 1999 and purchased its second.

Budget/funding The original Mule cost \$10,000, and the second one cost approximately \$12,000. In comparison, the city would have spent \$22,000–\$27,000 on a new pickup truck.

Program Description The Mule is a small utility vehicle that seats two people. The city purchased several attachments so that, for example, the Mule can haul equipment and plow snow. Its maximum speed is 25 miles per hour, and it uses much less fuel than a pickup truck. The Mule has proved extremely adept at reading water meters on the city's many lakefront properties, saving time and energy for employees while burning much less fuel than the pickup truck that would otherwise have been used. Because the Mule is much lighter than a truck, it can drive through residents' properties without tearing up their yards. Most city residents have a pressure sewage system equipped with grinder pumps. When city employees change out a grinder pump, they can use the Mule to get closer to the work site, bringing the new grinder loaded on the back of the Mule. A regular-size pickup truck would not allow the employees to get so close, so they would have to haul the grinder pumps in and out by hand. City employees designed a hoist specifically for removing grinder pumps that are located below ground. The hoist reduces lower back strain and other work-related injuries. The streets department uses the Mule to haul small amounts of gravel and

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dirt. The vehicle can salt and plow sidewalks and smaller parking or access areas in the winter. In the spring and summer, the Mule is used for fertilizing, seeding, and mulching the city parks.

Results By replacing the city's other vehicles for so many tasks, the Mules have helped increase the life of these other vehicles. Moreover, since Mules are much cheaper to buy and to run, they have saved the city a significant amount of money. In addition to being much more fuel efficient, parts and repairs for the Mules are much cheaper than for a truck. The city estimates that the Mules could last 8–10 years.

