MANAGING A FLEET: 3 BEST PRACTICES

1. **The Right Person -** The first *Best Practice* is to assign the role of **Vehicle Coordinator** to a specific person within the organization. The duties may require a part-time or full-time commitment depending on the size of your fleet. The Vehicle Coordinator is the "go to" person for everything automotive who facilitates decision-making with drivers, leadership, and other key stakeholders. It's important to develop a detailed job description including a clear set of expectations. This person provides front-line support to manage your community's vehicles and the

budget required to do so. It is no small task, and a common mistake is underestimating the time required to manage vehicles properly. Too often, this responsibility is handed off to someone who already has a full plate with the thought that it shouldn't take much time. Having the right person in this role, will help you to measure, manage, and finally gain control of the operating cost of your vehicle.

2. **The Right Tools -** Once you have the right person in place, we suggest that you be sure they have the necessary tools to do the job. Many companies still rely on manual, paper-based record keeping that typically doesn't provide useful information in real time; in effect, decisions can be made before money is spent. In addition, the arduous task of gathering, organizing, and recording hundreds of receipts for vehicle maintenance and fuel is very costly in terms of time and aggravation. Fortunately, today's software technology makes tracking and reporting your fleet's maintenance and repair history

quick and easy. One available option is Microsoft's Access database program, which does require some customization and manual data entry. Another option, which requires no manual data entry, is to utilize a *Managed Maintenance* program through a fleet management company like Fleet Services. These programs charge a nominal monthly fee per vehicle, and the data capture, entry, and reporting is done automatically. The cost is offset by what you save in the hours of labor required to do all of this manually.

3. **The Right Process -** The third Best Practice is to develop a work process that streamlines tracking and reporting activity. Information about your vehicles isn't worth much if you don't have it when you need it. Looking at an expensive repair bill after the fact is like a sports coach looking at the score of a game after the game is over . . . it's too late to do anything about it. If you make the investment in a **Vehicle Coordinator** and a software program, the return on your investment will be determined by the accuracy of your records and the efficiency with which information is reported to decision makers. As an example, the **Vehicle Coordinator** needs to review expensive repair estimates before work is authorized to identify cost savings opportunities. What process will ensure this happens consistently? Management reports must be made available to decision-makers at specific intervals.