

Accurate Mileage is the Lifeblood of Great Fleet Management

By Steve Saltzgeber

It's hard to believe, but I have been around the fleet business now for over thirty years and recognized early in my fleet career that there is nothing more VITAL to effective fleet management obtaining accurate mileage. For those not associated with fleet management on a daily basis - like those of us in OFM - it may not be readily apparent why mileage is so critical for the successful management of a fleet, which is why OFM has chosen to make this a focus of our state fleet operation.

...there is nothing more VITAL to effective fleet management obtaining accurate mileage.

The state of Georgia fleets average almost 12,000 fuel transactions per week.

OFM's primary objective of the "Accurate Mileage" campaign is to assist in educating fleet vehicle users of the VITAL importance of reporting accurate odometer readings when they utilize, fuel, and/or repair state vehicles during the course of carrying out their Department's critical missions.

The state's fleet coordinators need this VITAL information to provide state vehicle users with the appropriate transportation tools to carry out their day-to-day tasks. Without accurate mileage, fleet management professionals cannot perform its core mission to maximize efficiency and reduce overall fleet costs for the state. For example, mileage touches so many aspects of fleet management that it is hard to conduct any analysis or create recommendations relating to changes in the fleet operation without having accurate mileage.

Successful fleet managers have found that effective fleet management is heavily reliant on its ability to establish sound metrics to benchmark itself to peers and industry standards. For instance, standard industry metrics like, vehicle cost-per-mile, fuel miles-per-gallon, vehicle utilization, preventative maintenance compliance, and of course vehicle life-cycle intervals could not be measured and established without accurate mileage. So, this being the case OFM will continue stressing the importance of accurate vehicle mileage and its VITAL importance relative to operating and managing a safe and efficient state fleet.

The overall accuracy in the state's odometer mileage errors per week represents a whopping 39% improvement in just a short few months.

How the Program Works

Because the state fleet has over 20,000 vehicles and thousands of vehicle operators, as you can imagine a program of this magnitude could be difficult for OFM to get its arms around. Consequently, OFM works only on the concept of looking at the exceptions of the rule where it can have the greatest impact for promoting positive cultural changes and improving the overall user mileage activities statewide. For the past several years OFM has been monitoring these odometer errors and placing a copy of the file on its web site for fleet coordinators to access and correct these deficiencies. OFM understands that time is a premium and fleet coordinators are busy with many other tasks to keep their fleet operating.

Presently, OFM monitors the weekly odometer errors that are downloaded from the Wright Express fuel program into the state's VITAL data repository. The OFM professionals understand that most state

employees are hard workers and given the chance they strive to the right thing. Therefore, OFM capitalizing on this inherent strength of state workers doing the right thing - thought it would be more effective to create a weekly reminder - that OFM could *push* to assist those agencies struggling to keep up with their agency's vehicle odometer updating program.

Effective 31 December 2008, OFM began sending out automated email reminders to those agencies identified as the "Top Ten" agencies having the most difficulty collecting accurate odometer readings from their user community. This proactive approach was implemented as a customer service courtesy to increase the awareness of the VITAL importance of accurate mileage among agency fleet coordinators and help drivers better understand their role in effective fleet management. The chart to the above shows customers in the Top-Ten list and the efforts made in a two-week period as OFM tracks their results showing their improvements by percent change.

Week 7	State Agency	Weeks in Top Ten	Last Weeks WEX Errors	This Weeks WEX Errors	% Change
# 1	Customer A	7	360	306	-15%
# 2	Customer B	6	67	84	25.4%
# 3	Customer C	7	73	69	-5.5%
# 4	Customer D	7	47	54	14.9%
# 5	Customer E	7	40	38	-5%
# 6	Customer F	7	39	35	-10.3%
# 7	Customer H	7	48	34	-29.2%
# 8	Customer I	6	46	27	-41.3%
# 9	Customer J	4	34	26	-23.5%
# 10	Customer K	3	15	20	33.33%
			Total 1301	Total 1184	-8.99%

Figure 1: Weekly Top Ten Report

As a result of this proactive program OFM has seen its message of, "Accurate Mileage is the Lifeblood of Great Fleet Management, permeate throughout the entire state with many who operate a vehicle beginning to recognize the program's VITAL importance.

Effects of the Accurate Mileage Program

During the past several months since this "Accurate Mileage" campaign went into place OFM has seen a steady increase in the mileage accuracy throughout the state. As OFM's Fleet Director, I would be remiss if I did not personally thank all those vehicle operators, fleet coordinators, and department heads for their VITAL support of this important program.

Because of each agency's competitive spirit of doing the right thing – and their agency not being on the weekly Top Ten list – we have begun to see a cultural shift in conscientiousness of Georgia's state drivers and their affect of improving the results of accurate mileage statewide. The chart to the right shows the continuous improvements over a rolling ten-week period of time. (Note: Drop during holidays is due to reduced activity overall)

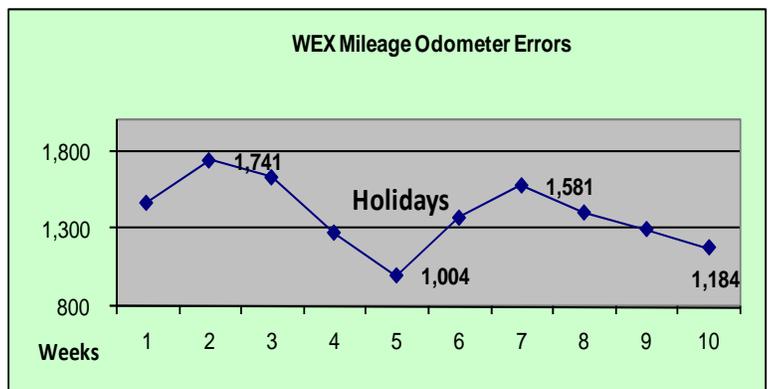


Figure 2: Continuous Improvement of WEX error trend

The state of Georgia fleet vehicles average almost 12,000 fuel transactions per week. Soon after the program commenced back in December 2008 the percentage of fuel odometer errors represented about 13% of the total fuel transactions per week. Due to diligent efforts of state fleet coordinators and their driver's efforts the weekly mileage errors have significantly been reduced in from over 1,890 (November) errors per week down to 1,184 (February). The overall accuracy in the state's odometer mileage errors per week represents a whopping 37% improvement in just a short few months. Congratulations!

During the next several months OFM will continue monitoring the vehicle mileage with its goal toward reaching zero odometer errors per week. As the state's vehicle mileage continues to improve OFM will be developing and releasing reports showing the continual improvement of the state's fleet operations. Keep up the great work!

"Accurate Mileage is the Lifeblood of Great Fleet Management!"

