DEUSA Fleet Success Stories: City of East Chicago, IN

Location: City of East Chicago, Indiana
Fleet type: Light-duty electric vehicles

Narrative: The City of East Chicago has emerged as a leader in Indiana's clean transportation movement. With its proactive adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in municipal operations and commitment to reducing emissions, East Chicago is setting an example for communities across the state. By embracing innovation and sustainability, the city is positioning itself as a model for environmental responsibility, economic efficiency, and public health improvement.

In a significant step towards the city's sustainable goals, the City of East Chicago deployed two Ford F-150 Lightnings and one Ford E-transit cargo van as part of its public works department. This transition demonstrated tangible results by displacing approximately 1,765 gallons of gasoline each year, lowering the city's operating costs while significantly reducing its carbon footprint.

The key aspect of the City of East Chicago's sustainability strategy is the synergy between the electric vehicles and the three (3) Level Two fleet chargers capable of 19.2 kW each. With this installment, they charge the vehicles overnight from the grid. With these two integrations into the daily city operations, the City of East Chicago has made a concrete step towards cleaner and a more sustainable municipal service.

Several key factors have driven East Chicago's commitment to electrifying its fleet and investing in a better infrastructure:

- Providing Better Environmental and Healthier Communities: East Chicago has been actively reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants towards improving air quality for the community.
- Increasing Financial Responsibilities: East Chicago has seen lower fuel and maintenance costs that generate long term savings for the city budget associated with station charging and maximum range efficiency for all their electric vehicles compared to the previous traditional trucks.
- Developing a Civic Leadership: East Chicago has set a strong concrete foundation for residents, businesses and peer municipalities in order to create a seamless process on introducing electric vehicles and expanding their infrastructure

- Driving Regional Impact: East Chicago's leadership has contributed to broader sustainability efforts, overall strengthening further collaborations across communities.

Outputs & Outcomes: East Chicago's efforts align with Indiana's statewide clean transportation and infrastructure priorities. At the same time, its investments bolster Indiana's growing EV manufacturing sector and help ensure that underserved communities are included in the transition to clean energy. East Chicago is not only contributing to the state's economic and environmental goals but is also ensuring equitable access to sustainable transportation solutions.

Looking forward, there are several opportunities for the city to build on this momentum. Expanding municipal fleet electrification to include sanitation, utilities, and emergency services would amplify both financial and environmental gains. Installing public charging stations in parks, libraries, and downtown areas would support residents and attract visitors, while also encouraging broader community adoption of EVs. Hosting ride-and-drive events and public education sessions could deepen community engagement, making the city's residents more aware of the benefits of EVs. Collaboration with regional partners such as the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) would further strengthen East Chicago's role as a leader in regional planning and infrastructure deployment. Finally, investments in workforce development through partnerships with local schools and colleges could create a pipeline of skilled workers capable of supporting EV growth and charger installation.

Best Practice & Lessons Learned: East Chicago's EV adoptions demonstrate the city's dedication to innovation, environmental stewardship, and fiscal responsibility. The measurable savings in fuel consumption and emissions reductions serve as proof of the value of this investment. With continued leadership and forward planning, East Chicago is well-positioned to serve as a model city for transportation electrification in Indiana, inspiring other municipalities to follow suit and helping to advance statewide clean transportation goals.

In the future, GOEVIN, Drive Clean Indiana, and the city of East Chicago, will focus on the following:

1. *Expand Fleet Electrification* – As more and more older vehicles are at their end-of-life cycle, the City of East Chicago will prioritize electric vehicles for the sanitation and emergency service departments.

2. *Increase the number of public charging stations* – As more electric vehicles are used, access to public charging is essential, whether this be on the street or in park lots.
3. *Increase Community Engagement* – Some of the best ways are to hold more in-person demonstration events, and more in-person or virtual educational campaigns.
4. *Increase Regional Collaboration* – As more and more EVs hit the road, creating long term partners with municipalities and utility groups that align new infrastructure planning and incentives.
5. *Investment in Workforce Development* – Support more local technical schools in creating training pathways for EV services, maintenance, and charging station installations.