DEUSA Fleet Success Story: City of Bozeman

Location: Bozeman, MT
Fleet type: Light-duty electric vehicles

Narrative: Similar to the City of Missoula, the City of Bozeman has gradually introduced electric vehicles (EVs) into its municipal fleet to advance sustainability goals outlined in the 2020 Bozeman Climate Plan. This plan establishes a city-wide target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and identifies transportation electrification as a critical component, noting that "a nearly complete transition of personal passenger and fleet vehicles to electric vehicles will be required between 2030 and 2050." As of the City's 2025 Climate Plan Impact Report, early investments in charging infrastructure included seven Level 2 charging stations at the Bozeman Public Safety Center and plans for a DC fast charger at the City Shops Complex. Since then, the City has expanded to a total of eleven Level 2 chargers and is in the process of installing two DC fast chargers, demonstrating continued commitment to supporting fleet electrification.

The City of Bozeman's fleet currently consists of 695 total assets, including 371 on-road vehicles. Within this fleet are 32 hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles, along with 9 battery-electric vehicles and an additional 2 EVs in active procurement. As part of this broader transition, the City has deployed four light-duty electric vehicles—including three Ford Lightning electric pickup trucks and one Chevrolet Volt—which serve as a practical and visible step toward scaling EV adoption across departments.

These vehicles are currently operated by five different city divisions, with a strong concentration in the Neighborhood Services team. Within this team, the three Ford Lightnings and the Chevrolet Volt have been used for a variety of daily municipal functions, including inspections, community engagement, and general in-town travel. To date, the Lightnings have accumulated approximately 4,000, 3,000, and 800 miles respectively, while the Volt has logged around 3,400 miles, with 381 miles driven in electric mode.

Bozeman has also invested in the infrastructure needed to support fleet electrification (as noted above). Charging strategies have been optimized for operational efficiency, with most vehicles requiring charging only once per week under typical conditions, and approximately twice per week during winter months. Overnight charging has proven sufficient to meet the city's daily operational needs.

City staff have consistently reported that EVs have been an incredibly effective addition to the fleet. In real-world use, vehicles often exceed their estimated range for in-town driving, helping to build confidence among operators. One staff member who operated the city's first EV during their time in the Streets Division noted that the vehicle was highly productive and reliable, reinforcing the practicality of EV adoption in municipal applications.

While range anxiety remains a commonly cited concern, Bozeman's experience suggests that it has had minimal impact on actual operations. With predictable daily routes and accessible charging, the vehicles have demonstrated dependable performance even in winter conditions. The transition has been further eased by the familiarity of the Ford Lightning platform, which closely mirrors traditional pickup trucks in both form and function.

Outputs & Outcomes: The introduction of light-duty EVs has resulted in significant operational and environmental benefits for the City. With an average efficiency of approximately 2.37 miles per kWh, these

vehicles deliver substantially lower energy costs compared to gasoline-powered equivalent vehicles. Reduced preventative maintenance requirements—such as the elimination of oil changes and fewer moving parts—have further decreased overall operating expenses.

Greenhouse gas emissions have been meaningfully reduced through the displacement of internal combustion engine vehicles, contributing to the city's broader sustainability and climate goals. These reductions are particularly impactful given the frequent, short-distance driving patterns typical of municipal operations.

The presence of EVs across multiple city divisions has increased internal familiarity and confidence, while also raising public awareness. Residents regularly observe these vehicles in use, helping to normalize electric transportation and challenge misconceptions about performance, especially in colder climates.

Additionally, the project has provided valuable real-world data on vehicle performance, energy consumption, and charging behavior. This information is informing future procurement decisions and helping the city build a scalable roadmap for fleet electrification.

Best Practices & Lessons Learned: One of the most important lessons learned is that real-world performance often exceeds expectations, particularly for in-town use. Range anxiety, while initially a concern, has proven to be largely unfounded when vehicles are matched appropriately to their use cases and supported by reliable charging infrastructure.

Strategic investment in charging infrastructure has been critical. Ensuring that vehicles can charge overnight at central locations has minimized operational disruptions and simplified fleet management. The addition of DC fast charging will further enhance flexibility as the program expands.

Starting with a small number of vehicles across multiple divisions has also been an effective approach. This strategy allows for broader organizational exposure, accelerates learning, and builds internal support for future expansion.

Finally, tracking and communicating performance data—including energy efficiency, mileage, and charging frequency—has been essential in demonstrating the value of EVs. Bozeman's experience highlights that with the right planning and vehicle selection, electric vehicles can seamlessly integrate into municipal fleets while delivering strong economic and environmental returns.