

POSTAL NEWS

No. 110/2009

Formulated by UNI-Japan Post in cooperation with UNI-Apro,
ASPEK Indonesia and SPPI

1. **Will e-trucks deliver your snail mail? June 2, 2009.**
2. **Liberia: Postal System Recovering. June 1, 2009.**
3. **Prescription for Postal Service. June 1, 2009.**
4. **U.S., Cuba Agree to Resume Migration and Postal Talks (Update1)**
5. **Turning Back The Clock On Postal Services. May 31, 2009.**
6. **Postal insurance benefits go unpaid in more than 300,000 cases. May 31, 2009.**
7. **Postal Union Steps Up Pressure On Labour MPs. June 4, 2009.**
8. **GM Nationalization: The Path Not Taken, Choices Still Ahead. June 3, 2009.**

1. Will e-trucks deliver your snail mail?

US Postal Service looks to "electrify" its fleet

By Mark Clayton | Staff Writer for The Christian Science Monitor/ June 2, 2009 edition

That familiar stop-and-go growl of a US Postal Service van schleping down the street, gulping a gallon every nine miles as it delivers the nation's mail, may soon be a sound of the past.

With gas costs biting and an aging American mail fleet nearing the end of its road, the idea of transforming the nation's largest public parade of gas guzzlers into an environmentally friendly 21st-century fleet is winning buzz and backers in Congress and the Obama administration.

More than a century after it unveiled an all-electric van that halved mail delivery times – then dumped the idea for gas-powered vehicles – the Postal Service is again looking seriously at electric-powered delivery.

Besides saving hundreds of millions of dollars in gasoline costs, switching the nation's 142,000 postal vehicles over to battery power could boost electric-truck development nationwide and provide clean mail delivery for the next century, a new federal study has found.

“Electrification of the Postal Service delivery vehicle fleet is practical, achievable, and desirable, and should be initiated now,” concludes a draft study of the vehicle-electrification idea for the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), a five-member body that advises the Postal Service.

In a newspaper opinion article last February, Ruth Goldway, the PRC commissioner who initiated the study, argued the time had come for the Postal Service to replace its fleet and go electric. All-electric vans have been tested by the Postal Service and “seem ideally suited” for the Postal Service’s relatively short 20- to 25-mile routes, she says in an interview.

From mail sent by stagecoach, train, and later airplanes, the Postal Service has long been a partner in developing the economy, Ms. Goldway says. An all-electric fleet could help establish a market for electric-vehicle parts and batteries just as US vehicle makers are ramping up to make plug-in hybrid electric and all-electric consumer vehicles.

“This next step of all-electric mail delivery would fit beautifully with that historic record of the Postal Service,” she says. “It would stimulate electric-vehicle technology growth for the rest of country.”

The current postal delivery fleet of squat, white-red-and-blue “Long Life Vehicles,” or LLV vans, is rated at 18.5 miles per gallon. Yet stop-and-go between mailboxes slashes the real-world number to about half that, dipping to the m.p.g. of a Hummer. And with 1.2 billion miles traveled each year, air pollution is considerable.

Switching to all-electric with regenerative brakes, which make a virtue of stopping and return power to the batteries, would immediately save 68 million gallons of fuel annually, the PRC study says. All-electric delivery would cost just 8 to 12 cents overall per mile, compared with 20 to 25 cents per mile for the current gas-powered delivery vehicles at today’s gas prices.

From Postal Service officials to members of Congress, the idea of electrifying the postal delivery fleet seems to be getting some consideration and producing at least a little buzz inside the Beltway.

“We love it and think it’s the way to go,” says a congressional staffer whose boss strongly favors an all-electric postal delivery van. “We think this will jump-start the electric-truck manufacturing in this country.” The staffer requested anonymity because he did not have permission to speak publicly.

But as alluring as the all-electric idea sounds, the Postal Service today is committed to preserving an aging fleet of LLVs whose oldest members date to 1987. The agency recently decided to keep the LLVs for another five to seven years – stretching many beyond their expected lifetimes.

Caught between declining mail volume and a major drop in revenue, the Postal Service has said little about its fleet needs, in part because it has a far more dire issue: looming healthcare payments. The agency needs Congress’s permission to slash some of the \$5 billion-plus annual payments to an employee healthcare fund approved during better economic times.

Add to that hurdle a steep upfront cost of up to \$10 billion to purchase all new electric vehicles, estimates Wayne Corey, the Postal Service’s manager of vehicle operations. That capital cost, combined with the healthcare payment crisis, makes it politically

difficult for the Postal Service to approach Congress for help funding a new fleet, observers say.

“We’re getting lots of advice and ideas these days, but unfortunately not any checks in the mail to go with them,” Mr. Corey says. “Some variant of an electric vehicle would probably work quite nicely in the majority of our operations. But it comes with a significant price tag.”

Still, Postal Service officials admit, the need for new vehicles is growing critical. In one sign of its seriousness, the Postal Service recently issued a formal request for information to identify companies able to convert LLVs to all-electric vehicles.

“At some point in the near future we are going to be looking to replace our fleet with energy-efficient vehicles that would significantly reduce our environmental footprint for the communities we serve,” says Sam Pulcrano, the service’s vice president of sustainability.

The all-electric idea would not be a shot in the dark. The Postal Service today has about 30 larger two-ton all-electric trucks delivering mail in Manhattan. The post office has also experimented with alternative-fuel vehicles for decades, including all-electric, compressed natural gas, fuel-cell, and hybrid gas-electric. While refusing to characterize which worked out best, it’s clear that postal managers do like electric.

“All electric vehicles have some great possibilities for use in particular since most routes average 17 to 18 miles a day and then return to the same depot for charging,” Mr. Pulcrano says. All-electric “is a viable option at this time. We’re looking at the technology.”

Saving gas isn’t the only, or necessarily even the main, motivation for such a shift. With 142,000 delivery vehicles (and more than 60,000 trucks and other vehicles) a battery-powered postal fleet could play a leading role in helping bring more wind, solar, and other “intermittent” renewable energy onto the electric grid, several observers say.

Because the delivery fleet is only used perhaps seven hours a day, the rest of the time they would be plugged in and charging up. Solar panels on postal stations’ rooftops could charge the vans from the sun and be virtually emissions free.

“You’ve got all these trucks storing energy, and solar panels feeding them,” Goldway says. “We could transform the post office sorting centers into a great environmental hub, where vehicles are plugged in and storing energy for the grid. It makes a lot of sense.”

But there’s also the promising possibility that the Postal Service could even make up to \$2,500 a year per vehicle if the vehicles can be outfitted with vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology.

That’s because adding V2G capability would allow for the massive 21 billion watt capacity of the vans’

collective batteries to act as a backup for the nation's power grid. It's an idea that may be winning converts at the Department of Energy, which has shown interest in a pilot V2G project involving the trucks, postal officials say.

"We see it as a potential revenue source for the Postal Service – a smart grid application on wheels," says the congressional staffer.

Even competitors might not oppose the idea. Federal Express and UPS currently use the Postal Service for its "last mile" delivery of small packages. If the Postal Service led on electrifying its fleet, the big package carriers could learn from it – and benefit from lower costs as they electrify their own delivery fleets later on.

"I've spoken with delivery company officials who would be very happy if the government would sponsor development of a critical mass of demand for this kind of all-electric service," says James Campbell, a consultant to the package delivery industry. "It's not a bad idea." □

000

2. Liberia: Postal System Recovering

1 June 2009

Monrovia — The Universal Postal Union (UPU) is upbeat that Liberia is making a big shift from an out-of-order postal system to an expedited and upgraded system where it is getting on par with international acceptable standards, thanks to the good leadership of the current team of experts led by Jeremiah Solunteh who has been making uptight efforts in consultation with his able lieutenants to make things work.

The UPU was not only concerned with patting the team on the back, the UPU has observed that more areas need to be tackled and strengthened before Liberia becomes fully certified. He also wants unobstructed attention and focus on rejuvenation of rural postal services.

Mr. Guenter Boehm, a Consultant of the UPU who has been in the country on a fact finding mission, has outlined what he has observed, where Liberia has improved and needed to do more. He was in the country to review the implementation of the master plan, review the implementation of the Multi-year Integrated Project (MIP) 2007/2008, prepare the MIP for the cycle 2009-2012 and prepare a Business Plan for the ongoing efforts to reestablish Liberia's postal service until 2015.

He told newsmen at the weekend that Liberia has successfully started the implementation of the master plan, but observed that the country still has to undertake considerable to reach the intended goals.

“I recognized that some activities are already completed, some have started and good progress has been made, some are still lagging behind. The activities lagging behind are more or less of internal nature or have a political impact,” he said.

This being his third mission, Mr. Boehm was in the country in 2006 and undertook an assessment study and later prepared a master plan on the reconstruction of Liberia’s damaged postal service.

Recounting the UPU’s support to Liberia as far as the MIP 2007/2008 is concerned, he said the UPU has provided 100,000 CHF while the German postal service also donated 10,000 Euro.

The availability of these amounts, according to the UPU Consultant, facilitated in the rehabilitation of the Counter Hall and the processing areas of the GPO ground floor, the transfer of mail processing from Randall Street to the GPO amongst others.

The UPU Consultant indicated “the MIP 2007/2008 is considered successfully implemented, although a few items are still not delivered,” he said without naming the undelivered items.

With the implementation of MIP 2007/2008, Mr. Boehm said the new MIP for the cycle 2009/2012 has been prepared and added that the technical team established by the ministry has been of great help.

Relevant Links

West Africa

Liberia

He said “the provision of improved access to postal services to rural areas is in the focus of the MIP. An amount of approximately US\$60,000 will be made available. With this amount about 12 post offices and postal outlets can be renovated and equipment procured.”

He expressed hope that with the opening of the post offices and postal outlets, postal services will reach rural populations.

While in the country in 2006, he undertook an assessment study and prepared a master plan on the reconstruction of Liberia’s postal service. He returned in 2007 and reviewed the implementation of that master plan and to develop the “first Multi-year Integrated Project (MIP) for the cycle 2007/2008. The MIP is part of the UPU’s technical assistance program.

Read comments. Write your own.

Copyright © 2009 The Analyst. All rights reserved. Distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com). To contact the copyright holder directly for corrections — or for permission to republish or make other authorized use of this material, click here.

AllAfrica aggregates and indexes content from over 125 African news organizations, plus more than 200 other sources, who are responsible for their own reporting and views. Articles and commentaries that identify allAfrica.com as the publisher are produced or commissioned by AllAfrica.

000

3. Prescription for Postal Service

June 1, 2009

The fewer people who are using the mail these days is hitting the U.S. Postal Service hard.

With revenues on the wane, the agency is even talking about cutting back on delivery from six days a week to just five as a way to conserve cash. But other ideas are in the works as well, some designed to increase volume. One of the handiest is the push to create mini postal outlets in retail businesses.

One of those sites is inside Devine's Pharmacy at 1949 Oak Tree Road in Edison, where the postal service has announced it will open a satellite office in September.

The idea is a winner as both a customer convenience and a moneymaking strategy.

"We're hoping this new center will help drive up volume," Edison Postmaster John Karp said. And the marketplace definitely needs it, since the nearest post office to the pharmacy is a long five miles away along the area's congested roads.

The new center is partly a response to requests from customers. If the postal service keeps listening to its clientele like this, it might just lift that sagging bottom line.

000

4. U.S., Cuba Agree to Resume Migration and Postal Talks (Update1)

[Share](#) | [Email](#) | [Print](#) | [A A A](#)

By Indira Lakshmanan

May 31 (Bloomberg) -- The U.S. and Cuba have agreed to resume migration and postal talks, according to a State Department official who briefed reporters.

Diplomats from both countries met in Washington yesterday and agreed to resume talks that have been suspended for six years on legal and illegal migration from Cuba to the U.S. The two officials also agreed to discuss the resumption of direct mail service, which hasn't existed for decades.

The U.S. and Cuba have not had full diplomatic ties in the aftermath of the 1959 communist revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power. Raul Castro formally succeeded his brother as president last year. The U.S. currently issues about 20,000 immigration visas a year for Cubans who apply through a lottery system in the Cuban Interests Section in Havana.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is traveling today to El Salvador to participate in talks on commerce and economic development with Latin American trade partners and attend the inauguration of Mauricio Funes as president tomorrow. She will attend a June 2 summit meeting of the Organization of American States in Honduras at which the possible readmission of Cuba to the group will likely be discussed.

The Obama administration's decision to propose migration and postal talks with Cuba, and Cuba's agreement, were a sign of President Barack Obama's policy of using dialogue to improve strained relations with the communist state, according to the U.S. official who met with a Cuban counterpart yesterday.

Travel Limits Removed

Obama in April removed travel limits for Cuban-Americans visiting family in Cuba that had been toughened by the Bush administration. Obama also ended restrictions on how much money Cuban-Americans can send relatives on the island and allowed U.S. telecommunications companies such as AT&T Inc. to get licenses to operate there.

Leaders of some Latin American countries are pressing Obama to end the U.S. embargo against Cuba, which has existed since 1962 after Castro expropriated the land of U.S. citizens and companies and aligned himself with the Soviet Union.

Before the U.S. takes further steps, Obama has said Cuba needs to do more to ease travel restrictions on its citizens, free political prisoners and allow for freedom of speech and religion. Obama said he believes U.S.-Cuban relations can improve during the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad in April.

A New Direction

"I am not interested in talking for the sake of talking," Obama said in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on April 17. "But I do believe that we can move U.S.-Cuban relations in a new direction."

Cuba indicated at yesterday's meeting that it would like to explore the possibility of cooperation with the U.S. on counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism and hurricane and disaster preparedness, the U.S. official told reporters.

Until now, cooperation on counter-terrorism has been on a case-by-case basis. Cuba was listed as a sponsor of terrorism, along with Iran, Syria and Sudan, in a U.S. State Department report on terrorism released earlier this year.

To contact the reporter on this story: Indira Lakshmanan in Washington at ilakshmanan@bloomberg.net

5. Turning Back The Clock On Postal Services

31 May 2009 by Steve Lawson - © Hellmail.co.uk

The subject of falling mail volume comes up time and time again in quarterly results for postal operators throughout Europe. Whilst unwelcome if you're in the mail business, it comes as little surprise either. We are after all, experiencing a rapid acceleration in digital communications and paper mail is no longer seen as the first choice when it comes to the movement of time-critical information.

Back in the 60s and 70s, the TV set barely changed other than changes in design to switches and knobs. Not only that, we only had two channels to watch until the emergence of BBC2. Life was arguably a great deal simpler even if we lacked choice and most of the time TV was a less singular hobby.

These days we have more channels that we can ever possibly watch. My children, who take to new technology without the need for instructions, constantly remind me that my mobile phone just isn't up to the mark, despite the fact that I can barely see the buttons on it let alone work my way through a plethora of menu options I see no need for. Whilst I try not to appear frumpy, I can't help feeling that gadgets designed to make life easier actually make things far more complicated and I quite often turn my mobile phone off for days on end. I just don't like being on constant call with the world expecting me to be permanently 'plugged in' - it unsettles me.

This global obsession with techno-wizardry is making permanent employment a thing of the past. We can no longer begin our working lives safe in the knowledge that a job will be secure or even permanent because everything is moving along at a greater pace. Unless you're in a niche market such as manufacturing clothes pegs, products are soon replaced with so-called better versions or quickly made obsolete. We also have a global economy that depends almost entirely on the motor car when we all know that fuel is running out and costing us more every year.

Progress is not always progress and too many of these advances serve little purpose at all other than a talking point. I mention all this because our fascination for high-speed communications is also throttling the life out of postal services. We see postmen and postwomen as icons of community life but at the same time reject the slow pace with which mail is collected and delivered compared to the immediacy of email. At heart, this is what is killing postal services and why Unions are struggling to protect jobs. Its an enemy that is difficult to square up to or combat and the trend for the moment, is ever downwards.

This coming week will see the privatisation of Royal Mail back in the spotlight as all the debate reaches its conclusion in the House of Commons. With so many Labour MPs having signed an early day motion to reject the sell-off, I think we can guarantee

a turbulent week, but this is an industry being overwhelmed by technology that needs solutions.

The Liberalisation plan for European postal services isn't working as was originally envisaged. Decline in mail volume has been rapid and far more more difficult, with the exception of parcels, to determine exactly where the money is to be had in the postal business. Selling a part share in the Royal Mail that can achieve the goals set out in the Hooper Report and at a fair price, is not going to be easy. On the other hand, left as it is, it will continue to decline unless there is massive investment in equipment that can keep pace with much faster and more reliable electronic communications.

To keep postal services as they are, we'd all need to go back to two TV channels and a much slower pace of life altogether but quite honestly I don't see much chance of that.

© Hellmail.co.uk - Postal Industry News

000

6. Postal insurance benefits go unpaid in more than 300,000 cases

Sunday 31st May, 04:12 AM JST

TOKYO —

Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Kunio Hatoyama said Saturday there were likely to be more than 300,000 cases in which due benefits were not paid out to holders of postal life insurance policies before the 10-year process of privatizing Japan's postal services began in October 2007.

The total number of cases is estimated to be "between 300,000 and 400,000," Hatoyama told reporters after Japan Post Insurance Co. presented an investigation report on the matter to the Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry.

Kyodo News Service

000

7. Postal Union Steps Up Pressure On Labour MPs

04 June 2009 by David Lynch - © Hellmail.co.uk

The Communication Workers Union, the union which represents the majority of the UK's Royal Mail workforce, wrote directly to all Labour MPs today, highlighting its opposition to the part-privatisation of the state-owned postal operator.

The letter, signed by Billy Hayes, CWU general secretary, and Dave Ward, deputy general secretary, outlines the CWU's opposition to the current format of the Bill and

highlights areas which the CWU believes need altering, including detail around regulation:

"The Government ought to recognise that the assumptions behind its current policy are out of touch with the real state of the postal market. The annual reports published by TNT and Deutsche Post recently demonstrates the critical position both these companies are in. As neither are able to provide the expertise the Government believes is essential, then the only reasonable policy is to ensure Royal Mail is transformed in the public sector" it said.

The CWU said it would continue to campaign against the passage of the Bill, whether or not the Government was able to secure an actual sale of Royal Mail shares in the next few months. It said it agreed with the Government that legislation is required to address a number of problems the industry faces but that the elements of privatisation should be removed.

© Hellmail.co.uk - Postal Industry News

000

Posted: June 3, 2009 06:10 PM

8. GM Nationalization: The Path Not Taken, Choices Still Ahead

Whatever the woes of General Motors -- and they are substantial -- it does not follow that the government needed to drive the company into bankruptcy. With at least \$50 billion in government supports undergirding the new GM, the Obama administration auto task force deciding GM's fate could have steered the company away from bankruptcy court. If it had so chosen, it could have acquired the company outright -- a much better course to advance the legitimate public interest in rescuing GM.

The purported rationale for bankruptcy was to deal with the problem of recalcitrant bondholders, owed \$27 billion by GM and rejecting the GM/government offer of exchanging that debt for a 10 percent share in the New GM. It has been apparent for weeks that the bondholder problem could be addressed with some creative negotiations. By the end of last week, the government had found a way to be creative; having sweetened the pot, an accommodation with the bondholders was at hand.

But GM, under the aegis of the auto task force, filed for bankruptcy anyway, setting in motion a series of likely excessive factory shutdowns, needless dealership closings and anticipated cancellation of the rights of victims of defective GM cars.

Given the deal with the bondholders, the bankruptcy declaration was wholly discretionary and avoidable.

But the government had available a much better alternative to avoid bankruptcy than just cutting a deal with the bondholders. It could have simply taken complete control of the company.

Instead of declaring bankruptcy on Monday, the government could have announced the taking of GM through eminent domain.

The government could have paid shareholders the market price for their shares -- worth less than \$1 billion. It could have paid bondholders the market price for their bonds; trading at about 8 cents on the dollar, that would have totaled a little more than \$2 billion. The UAW, which needs cash not equity to fund its healthcare benefit pool, could have been given preferred stock paying a substantial interest rate. (Assuming it could reach agreement on a shared vision for the restructured GM, the U.S. government could have decided to work in concert with the Canadian and Ontario governments -- which will control 12 percent of the New GM.)

This would have been an aggressive approach -- but less so than the administration's maneuvers in bankruptcy.

With complete control of the company, the government could have explicitly set out to manage General Motors in the public interest. As Ralph Nader has said, this would not require micromanaging the company, but it would require managing it.

There are many different public management options. Consider the U.S. Postal Service as one example. It operates independently but under government supervision, and with some affirmative mandates and obligations. USPS is required to deliver on Saturdays, for example, even though it may be more profitable to cut Saturday service. It must deliver to the entire country, with a flat-rate first class stamp, even though it would likely make more money with limited service or differential rates.

A GM under public management would aim for a return to profitability -- or at least breaking even. But it would take into account other public priorities. And it would focus on medium- and long-term objectives rather than short-term profitability.

A publicly managed GM would take pains to avoid excessive layoffs and would not needlessly close dealerships. A publicly managed GM would abandon GM management's desire to move production for the U.S. market to low-wage countries. It would maintain decent wages, benefits and working conditions. It would not maneuver to deny victims of defective GM cars their day in court. It would prioritize safety in its new vehicle design.

Above all, a publicly owned and managed GM would invest heavily in new ecologically friendly technology. As part of a government plan to remake the nation's transportation infrastructure, it would retool plants to meet growing demand for buses and trains.

Having decided not to pursue the full public ownership route, the Obama administration still finds itself about to own 60 percent of the New GM. This majority stake comes with some important limitations; with a significant portion of the

company still trading publicly (10 percent immediately after bankruptcy, and more over time), the government will have legal duties to the minority shareholders.

Still, the government as majority shareholder will have ultimate control, and the long-term and socially appropriate investment practices can all be justified as in GM's long-term interest.

The biggest problem is that the Obama administration explicitly disdains a desire to manage the company to advance the public interest. Even worse, the administration has stated its desire to begin selling off the government-held shares in GM in six to 18 months after the company emerges from bankruptcy; that posture puts a premium on measures to achieve short-term profitability ... exactly the orientation that landed GM in its present predicament.

Related News On Huffington Post:

000

Collected by Chairul Anwar, Bandung, Indonesia.

E-mail address : chairulanwar49@operamail.com, uyungchairul@plasa.com.