POSTAL NEWS
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1. Postal Service, Social Security

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Regarding the Aug. 24 article "No COLA For '10 AND '11 Checks" [front page], it states "The average monthly benefit for retirees is $1,153 this year."

As Arte Johnson in the old "Laugh-In" TV series would say, "Verrry interesting."

I retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 1992 after 28 years service. At the time I started with the USPS, it was a civil service job.

Prior to and during this time, I worked usually two jobs and paid maximum Social Security for more than 20 years.

A few years before my retirement, our Congress, in its infinite wisdom, decided that people who retired froma civil service job (not to includeanyone in Congress) should not be eligible to draw the full amount of Social Security they were entitled to because this would be considered double-dipping.

They called this the WindfallElimination Act.

So, instead of the $525 per monthI was entitled to when I applied forSocial Security at age 62, I foundI was only allowed $242 permonth.

The COLA granted by Social Security in 2008 was 3.5 percent. The increase in Medicare payments was just a tad higher and, as a result, my Social Security check increased by $1.

Now comes a new administration spending money faster than the Government Printing Office can print it 24/7 and it decides no COLA for Social Security recipients for the next two years.

Naturally, it is the fault of George Bush, or so they say.

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2. **Postal dept, 5-6 more banks to distribute New Pension System**

6 Sep 2009, 1208 hrs IST, PTI

NEW DELHI: To distribute the nascent New Pension System on a larger scale, interim

pension regulator PFRDA is likely to rope in the postal department and five to six more banks, including PNB and Standard Chartered Bank for collecting contributions of subscribers.

"In a month or so, the names of 5-6 banks, including Punjab National Bank, Vijaya Bank, Syndicate bank, Standard Chartered Bank and the postal department are likely to be notified as Points of Presence," a Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) official told PTI.

The official further said the postal department has shown interest in joining the NPS as a PoP and the PFRDA is having discussions with them. The request from these banks has also come.

PoPs are contact and collection points for customers wanting to be part of NPS.

Currently, there are 21 NPS PoPs which include, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, IDBI Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce, Axis Bank and Union Bank of India.

Despite being launched four months ago, NPS has not made much headway.

Its distribution received a big blow after the country's largest insurer, Life Insurance Corp (LIC), ceased to be a PoP in May following a directive from the sectoral regulator IRDA.

"No insurance company can act as a PoP," the IRDA circular had said.

Recently, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) Managing Director A K Dasgupta told PTI, "we have completely suspended operations (of NPS) and returned all the remittances we have received. No further developments at this stage."

PFRDA is believed to be unhappy with the distribution activities carried out by PoPs and had met them last week asking them to get their act right.

"We have asked them to come out with concrete plans in a month as to how they would expand their business," a PFRDA official said.

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Published September 05, 2009 06:54 pm - In an effort to cut costs, the Athens post office will soon send magazines and magazine-sized mail to Birmingham for processing rather than to Huntsville. One source says the change will slow the mail and force Huntsville workers to transfer, but U.S. Postal Service officials say customers won’t notice the change in service, the Athens office will see no change and no employees will be laid off.

3. **Official: Postal service change won't have much impact here**

By Jean Cole
jean@athensnews-courier.com

In an effort to cut costs, the Athens post office will soon send magazines and magazine-sized mail to Birmingham for processing rather than to Huntsville.

One source says the change will slow the mail and force Huntsville workers to transfer, but U.S. Postal Service officials say customers won’t notice the change in service, the Athens office will see no change and no employees will be laid off.

Beginning in mid-September — possibly Sept. 12 — so-called flats or magazine and magazine-sized mail with zip codes beginning with 356, 357 or 358 will be sent to Birmingham. The same items coming to North Alabama will be processed in Birmingham before coming to Huntsville.

“We have to consolidate what we can so we can save some money,” said Joseph Breckenridge, Postal Service spokesman for Alabama and Northern Florida. “By concentrating in a central location, you can make better use of people and machines, and that is what is driving this.”

The rerouting of flat mail from Huntsville to Birmingham involves about 500,000 pieces of mail a day, said a source who asked to remain anonymous. The source also said the change would delay mail by a couple of days, but Athens Postmaster Gary Bean believes Birmingham can adapt.

“(Mail) volume has dropped off so much that Birmingham should be able to handle it,” Bean said.

“There is not going to be any impact on service, so it should be completely transparent from a customer point of view,” Breckenridge added. “We are doing some consolidations because we are bleeding due to the economy and the Internet.”

He said the Postal Service expects to lose about $7 billion this year.

“We are looking for efficiencies where we can find them,” Breckenridge said. “We know we can’t do one or two things, we have to do 100 things.”

The anonymous source said the change could mean about 40 local workers will have to take jobs in Birmingham or elsewhere over the next four months — anywhere from Texas to Ohio.

Breckenridge could only confirm that the change would not affect the Athens post office and that no one would lose his or her job.

“We don’t expect to lose any career employee, as opposed to a temporary employee,” he said. “We don’t expect to lose even our temps.”

How much bleeding?

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4. **Postal Service Set to Lead the Way in Deploying Electric Fleet**

Posted by Naiomi Solomon | September 5th, 2009 at 6:59 pm |

On August 28th, the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Postal Service published the results of a feasibility study titled, “Electrification of Delivery Vehicles.” While the feasibility study reaches a foregone conclusion and recommends the purchase of a 3,000 unit demonstration fleet, I was surprised by the high level of Federal subsidies the Inspector General thought necessary to bring EVs within Postal Service capital investment policies. I was even more surprised by the conclusion that the tipping point in the economic analysis was revenue from ancillary vehicle to grid, or V2G, services.

The Postal Service operates a fleet of 219,000 vehicles, including 146,000 delivery vehicles. The feasibility study focused on the long-life vehicles, or LLVs, that have been a part of the American landscape since the late 80’s.

The current version of the LLV is built on a GM truck chassis, costs the Postal Service about $19,000 and gets about 10 miles per gallon; which isn’t bad for the kind of low-speed stop-start driving on a typical mail route. The average LLV is driven about 18 miles a day and roughly 96% of the LLV fleet drives less than 40 miles a day. The vast majority of LLVs are parked at Postal Service facilities from 5 p.m. till 8 a.m.

The proposal evaluated in the Postal Service feasibility study would replace the internal combustion engine and drive train with an electric drive and 20 kWh of lithium-ion batteries of unspecified chemistry. The projected cost of a 3,000-unit fleet of electric LLVs, or E-LLVs, is $120 million, or $40,000 per unit. The projected cost of associated charging station infrastructure and training is $16.75 million.

The most striking aspect of the Inspector General's report is the fact that it was written from the perspective of an EV buyer, rather than an EV seller. After years of reading up-beat promotional materials that talk about ten-year battery lives and seven- to ten-year payback periods, it was refreshing to see a more skeptical buyer's analysis that:

* Assumed the battery pack would have to be replaced after five years;
* Assumed a fifty percent reduction in repair and maintenance costs;
* Assumed a stable correlation between gasoline and electricity prices;
* Required internal returns of thirty percent per year like you see in most businesses;
* Required payback periods of less than three years like you see in most businesses;
* Concluded that substantial Federal subsidies were essential; and
* Concluded that ancillary revenues from V2G services were essential.

The Inspector General's report was not overly kind to E-LLVs, but then I've never expected undue kindness from fleet buyers who are invariably constrained by capital spending policies that require a return on investment, as opposed to a return of investment. The good news for EV developers is that the Inspector General was able to put together a plan that worked for the Postal Service. The bad news is the plan will be difficult for other fleet users to duplicate because the feasibility study assumes that:

* The Postal Service will get grants for 74% of the cost difference between a standard LLV and an E-LLV;
* The Postal Service will save roughly $1,300 per vehicle year from reduced fueling costs;
* The Postal Service will save roughly $1,500 per vehicle year from reduced maintenance; and
* The Postal Service will earn roughly $2,300 per vehicle year from V2G services.

The Inspector General's report analyzed four possible scenarios. In the basic scenario of no grants and no V2G revenue, the E-LLVs were a poor investment that had a negative return over ten years. In two middle of the road scenarios that included (a) grants without V2G revenues and (b) V2G revenues without grants, the payback periods were in the five-year range and internal rates of return were 15% to 20%. In a best-case scenario that included both grants and V2G revenue, the payback period was under two years and the internal rate of return was over 60%. Since the Postal Services has influential friends in high places, I think it's a safe bet that they'll be able to negotiate the details of a best case project.

The only thing that concerns me about the strategy the Postal Service has adopted for its E-LLV demonstration fleet is the long-term stability of V2G revenue. The E-LLV fleet will be on the road every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., the precise period when demands on the power grid are greatest. So while the proposed fleet of 3,000 E-LLVs will have the theoretical ability to provide 45 MW of frequency regulation services, it will only be able to provide frequency regulation services when demand for those services is relatively low. While I've not been able to find any detailed estimates of the national demand for frequency regulation services during off-peak hours, I have to assume that the aggregate demand for frequency regulation is smaller than demand for other grid-based storage systems. I also have to assume that V2G services will compete directly with alternatives like the flywheel systems that Beacon Power (BCON) is developing which will be available 24/7.

Overall, I believe the Postal Service proposal to deploy a fleet of 3,000 E-LLVs presents an unparalleled opportunity to provide a reliable real-world testing laboratory for ideas that have not yet been reduced to practice. The Postal Service has long promised "neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night, nor the winds of change, nor a nation challenged, will stay us from the swift completion of our appointed rounds." Since one of the biggest challenges facing America is the efficient use of energy and the prevention of waste, I can't imagine a better organization to lead the way.

In a perfect world, the Postal Service would break its planned E-LLV fleet into as many as a half-dozen subgroups that would each use a different battery chemistry from a different vendor. The willing industry participants I can identify off the top of my head include Altair Nanotechnologies (ALTI), Ener1 (HEV), Johnson Controls (JCI), Valence Technologies (VLNC), and A123 Systems (IPO pending). With proper monitoring, the amount and relative uniformity of the data generated in the first few years of testing for both EV and V2G applications could be priceless.

(By John Petersen | Seekingalpha.com)

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5. **PCMC to accept postal order for RTI payment**

TNN 6 September 2009, 06:03am

PUNE: The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has taken a decision to accept payment for securing

information under Right To
Information (RTI) Act 2005 through postal order.

Additional commissioner Subhash Dumbre confirmed that such a decision has been taken.

Shriram Pande, president of Right to Information Act (RTI) forum of senior citizens, said, "The PCMC is the first municipal corporation in the state to issue such an order and provide such a facility." He also said that the PCMC will take action under section 20 of the RTI Act against the official who refuses to accept the Indian postal order.

Pande said that a person has to pay Rs 2 as charges per photocopy of any document. This amount has to be paid in cash or through a demand draft or banker's cheque.

"Any applicant who receives a letter from the PCMC about payment of charges for documents sought under RTI Act can go to the nearest post office and buy a postal order on the name of Accounts Officer, Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation' and send it through post to the PCMC office. If the applicant is going in person to PCMC office then he should take the postal order to the office and get the requisite information," Pande said.

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