

# POSTAL NEWS

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## **1. Postal Service to Test Electric Truck**

By Tony Borroz January 21, 2010

The U.S. Postal Service keeps chugging along in its quest to find an electric delivery truck, and it has enlisted the help of two outfits for the final part of its study. One of them, AC Propulsion, is well-known within the EV community. The other, AutoPort, is the company that gets to do the heavy lifting.

The companies will work together on the engineering, development and conversion of a conventional mail truck to electric power, one of five ideas the Postal Service is considering to begin electrifying its fleet of 142,000 vehicles. Once the truck is built and tested, it will see duty on the streets of Washington, D.C. AC Propulsion CEO Tom Gage is confident his truck will measure up.

“We are thrilled to partner with AutoPort to present a long-term solution to the U.S. Postal Service,” he said in a statement. “Our solution provides the safety and performance required by the USPS, and it will reduce cost, increase efficiency and improve driveability for the mail carriers.”

Gage and his crew are no strangers to the EV game.

Gage and Alan Cocconi were the guys who thought up an electric sports car that offered awesome performance and impressive range. That car was the T Zero, which did zero to 60 in 3.8 seconds and offered a range of 200 miles using commodity lithium-ion cells. If it sounds familiar, it should — Martin Eberhard and Elon Musk urged them to produce the car, but they declined. Eberhard and Musk went on to bring us the Tesla Roadster. Gage and Cocconi went on to develop the eBox, a Toyota Scion converted to electric power, because they felt it was more practical. Further boosting the company’s cred, BMW tapped AC Propulsion to help develop the Mini-E electric car.

As for AutoPort, it is an automotive conversion and restyling center that, among other things, does fleet conversions.

Together the two firms will strip the engine, transmission and other components from a conventional mail truck — the venerable Grumman LLV, or “Long Life Vehicle” — like the one in the pic and install an AC Propulsion AC-150 drive system. It’s an integrated electric-propulsion system that includes an AC induction motor, inverter,

charter and 12-volt power supply with vehicle-to-grid capability built in. The system is good for up to 200 kilowatts (268 horsepower). As much as we love the idea of a mail truck with that kind of power, it seems unlikely the truck will be that extreme. AC Propulsion claims its system offers a range of up to 300 miles at 60 mph but didn't provide any specs for the mail truck.

AutoPort will handle the conversion and ensure the vehicle meets the SAE International Guidelines for Electric Vehicle Safety and the myriad federal motor vehicle safety regs. Once that's done and the truck completes initial testing, it will hit the streets of Washington for at least a year, so Postal Service brass can monitor carrier satisfaction with the vehicle and its cost of operation and maintenance.

Say what you will about electric vehicles for the rest of us, they make sense for postal carriers. The trucks follow predetermined routes, they're kept in centralized locations and they driven roughly the same number of miles each day. All of that makes range and recharging a non-issue. The postal service is ideal for electrification, and the impact could be huge because it maintains the largest civilian vehicle fleet in the world.

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## **2. Govt cites technicality, denies information under RTI**

Rishikesh Bahadur Desai, TNN, 21 January 2010.

HUBLI: If you thought that "the dog ate my homework" was the lamest excuse anyone can come up with, wait. The state government can do better. It has rejected an RTI application, saying the postal orders were bought long ago!

An RTI application by 'The Times of India' had sought to know information on the total loan taken by the government and the principal and interest paid by it to lending agencies like the World Bank. However, the application has been returned, saying the Indian Postal Orders (IPOs) that were submitted along with it towards the Rs 10 fee for obtaining information, were purchased long ago — nine years ago, to be precise. These can't be encashed now and therefore, the government cannot give the information sought in the RTI application.

However, the IPOs of face value of Rs 5 each were bought at the Hubli post office on January 5, 2010. The application was sent by courier on January 7 and the department of finance received it on January 8. The official reply issued by under secretary finance (fiscal reforms and computer cell) J V Chandrashkear states that the post master of Vidhana Soudha post office had returned them saying they were bought on January 5, 2001.

"The only way to explain this is to find out whether the postal stamps on the IPOs read as 2001, and not 2010. There was no other reason why the government should reject an RTI application," a finance department officer said, requesting anonymity. Rejecting an RTI application is a sensitive issue and the government would want the postal department take a decision on the encashment of the IPO or otherwise, he added.

## IS IT A DELAY TACTIC?

Though the RTI Act has a provision for providing information free of cost to the members of BPL families, there is no provision for receiving fees after the information is given to the applicant.

However, RTI activists feel the government could have ignored the technicalities about fees and provided the information. "The government should have been magnanimous enough to have provided the information first and then asked for fees. But government Public Information Officers (PIOs) don't do it as their mental make-up is to withhold or delay information and not give it readily," said J S D Pani of NGO Mahiti Hakku Jagruti Vedike.

The ideal reply from the finance department's PIO should have been: "The information sought under the RTI runs into so many pages and therefore, you need to pay an additional fee of Rs 2 per page. Along with that, please send the statutory fee of Rs 10 as the IPOs sent earlier were not encashed".

"However, returning the application citing the IPOs were old shows that the government is not interested in sharing the information. This clearly reflects the attitude of the PIOs," Pani said.

Pani even suspected that PIOs get some kind of training in rejecting or delaying RTI applications. "Such training helps them find reasons not to give information and not to give it away proactively," he claimed.

Director, postal services (north Karnataka), Dr Veena Kumari, said she would check whether the IPOs had wrong dates. However, she said chances of postal personnel stamping the IPOs with old dates were less. "We are usually careful while stamping IPOs. The date on the stamps is changed every day and every document is cross-checked for accuracy of the stamp," she added.

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