

MADISON FLEET BIENNIAL REPORT 2023: CHRONICLING THE CLIMB TO THE TOP

“Second place should need a telescope to see us.” - Elon Musk



February 2023 is finally time for Madison Fleet to share this second Biennial Report, reflect on these last two years, and officially announce to the world who we think we are. The climb is over. **Today we confidently report that Fleet has *already* achieved our overarching ambition: to be the #1 fleet in North America** by helping lead a future-oriented, infrastructure-heavy revolution in transportation sustainability and vehicle safety on behalf of the entire world from right here in South-Central Wisconsin, USA. Our employees and community heavily depend on our success and deserve this. All of the hard work involving thousands of people under our leadership being chronicled here purposefully and benevolently boosts the Wisconsin private sector economy every day without compromising on quality or our customer agencies' critical front line missions. The team here is made up of mostly decent people, innovative revolutionaries operating from inside the government system itself- an exceedingly rare combination.



Bold, cocky self-indulgent self-declarations, you may be thinking. Please don't take my word for it. Judge for yourself as we'll make this case short and sweet, with links provided for further research if the spirit so moves you. In these last 8 seasons **we have permanently cemented a legacy of bending our industry's status quo paradigm as the public servants who methodically built a holistic top-shelf global model for other public and private fleets to follow for years to come.** And it all sprang from a baseline of extreme mediocrity. We arrived here by doing something novel that only a team of largely mechanics would know how to do best: taking apart the complex fleet service machine, breaking down and analyzing all aspects of the machine, eliminating some parts we don't need, and figuring out how to put it all back together to finally *become the machine we used to rage against.* Today we utilize robust alliances with our sister City agencies and external partners to run an optimistic little Midwestern operation that features:

- **Drastic action in hiring and promoting women, minorities, and the differently** abled in a severely under-represented industry for these groups, while making a concerted effort to find new external partners of these groups. I check two of these boxes myself so you bet this is personal
- **Dramatic improvements in employee morale and performance** per objective metrics
- **Cutting our full-time workforce by 12%** without layoffs while expanding our fleet count by over 9%
- **Greatly improving the in-service rate multiple times over for vehicles and equipment** to a level largely unrivaled by international standards, hovering around 97%. This number means more availability and dependability of important resources for our customers, matters more than all other metrics, touches everything we do, and has allowed us to go off and work on a battery of new initiatives
- The first-ever [LEED GOLD](#) certified municipal auto garage in all North America [per USGBC](#) that featured an unprecedented, raucous public [ribbon-cutting ceremony](#) open to the community, and more personal tours provided for visitors of this non-public facility from around the world since than any other municipal garage we can imagine. Guests include Governor Tony Evers, Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes, multiple Wisconsin State Secretaries, multiple former Madison Mayors, senior government officials from Canada and the Gambia, high-level private sector executives, labor unions, students of all levels, and thousands of others
- The Fleet HQ on Nakoosa Trail is also the #3 greenest government garage in all North America as [awarded by NAFA](#). My previous home at NYC Parks got... #2; congratulations to my good friends over there. Special thanks to City Engineering and a large number of private companies led by Wisconsin-based [C.D. Smith](#) plus [Stantec](#), [Mead & Hunt](#) for partnering with us on this successful construction project that should serve Madison well for 70 years.
- The [#19 Leading Public Fleet in North America](#) as awarded by Government Fleet magazine, out of 38,000 public fleets. This was our first time cracking the top 20.
- [The first-ever EV fire truck](#) to be placed into service in all North America, manufactured by Pierce in Wisconsin and operated daily by Madison Fire Department: an exemplary partnership between Pierce, MGE, MFD, City Engineering, and Fleet. While this prototype has been great the first one rolling off the mass production line is headed our way too.
- One of the safest and most sustainable Vision Zero inspired fleets internationally [as recognized by the UN-affiliated Together for Safer Roads and NYC DCAS](#)
- A [top data management program](#) in the entire government fleet industry
- **By far the largest electric vehicle (EV) fleet** in Wisconsin and well beyond
- **By far the largest fleet EV charging station network** in Wisconsin and well beyond
- By far the largest municipal fleet grid and [off-grid solar EV charging program](#) in Wisconsin and well beyond
- By far the [largest biodiesel truck fleet in Wisconsin](#) and well beyond garnered several national awards last year. This is less sexy but far more impactful so far than EVs for Madison emissions. 100% of the supply originates from Wisconsin itself in a remarkable display of domestic energy production, energy security, energy independence and support for local rural and urban economies while taking a **sledgehammer** to upstream and downstream CO2 emissions. Our strong biodiesel public/private/nonprofit partnership includes [Clean Fuels Alliance America](#), [REG/Chevron](#), [Optimus Technologies](#), [United Soybean Board](#), and [Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board](#)
- **By far the largest hybrid-electric fleet** in Wisconsin and well beyond, with police cars in the vanguard each averaging 73% better fuel efficiency
- By far the [largest soybean oil tire fleet](#) in Wisconsin and well beyond, once again supporting both local ecology and local economy

- **A nearly 100% paperless operation** with every Fleet employee on the cloud using a City assigned laptop or tablet, including all mechanics, despite the complexity of our work. I don't touch paper anymore and we've saved reams of cash and trees alike
- The top public works GPS/telematics fleet program in Wisconsin and well beyond in partnership with [STS](#) and [GeoTab](#)
- By far the [largest-ever Sustainable Transportation public event series](#) in Wisconsin history with co-hosts [Wisconsin Clean Cities](#), [MGE](#), & [Alliant Energy](#): The Transportation & Innovation Expo. Attendance is free. Hope to see you at the next one in October.
- We've set [the elite national standard](#) for fleet high school/technical college/4 year college apprenticeship programs in partnership with Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison College, and UW-Madison.
- We launched and run, as a side hustle, the **leading interagency employee recognition program you'll find anywhere in City government anywhere**, the #TeamCity awards that has publicly rewarded hundreds of outstanding individuals and teams from every department
- **A steady stream of generous outside funding** for initiatives won from both the private sector and public sector bolsters the purchasing power of our relatively miniscule Capital and Operating budgets
- **Supporting important operational functions** of Madison Metro, City Clerk's Office for elections, Water Utility, Human Resources, Multicultural Affairs Committee, Women's Initiatives Committee, Traffic Engineering on Vision Zero, and other agencies beyond the scope of our own fleet mission, all behind the scenes at no cost, all as a side hustle
- **By far what has got to be the most active and substantive public outreach program by any municipal fleet anywhere** to share best practices with many thousands of others, leveraging our massive and growing international network of contacts. This outreach spans across our [active website](#) and social media, [mainstream news media attention](#), dozens of speaking engagements where I'm invited to present on Madison's cutting edge work for large audiences in Madison, Milwaukee, Green Bay, New Orleans, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, Orlando, Washington DC, on countless webinars and podcasts. This report is part of the outreach. Some of this stuff has gone viral.
- I volunteer to serve on the board of Wisconsin Clean Cities, the Customer Advisory Board for REG/Chevron, and as a Biodiesel Ambassador for Clean Fuels Alliance America. Awesome partnerships paying mutual dividends in every case.
- We also **conduct regular 1-1 free consulting work and training** for other city governments, Dane County, State of Wisconsin, State of South Carolina and other state governments, the federal government, the US Army, Native American tribes, private companies, the government of Quebec, Canada, Kanifing in the Gambia, educational institutions, utility companies, and trade associations. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and we humbly welcome it. Strangers from near and far reach out to us every day to ask about our work, which proves the outreach is working.

This is what public service means to us, as one small fleet like ours won't make a damn dent in society's most intractable problems if we are not a force multiplier. We don't compete with other fleets, we join forces with them.

This litany of assertions is backed up by the juggernaut of rich and accurate data sets we've built, and by local, national and international awards recognition from third party judges we graciously accept on behalf of Madison, most of them unsolicited. The awards matter because they encourage us to keep going, and further turbocharge our outreach towards affecting global change. We thank the judges for noticing us from so far away.

This has all been great, but on this front we have already achieved all that we could ask for and more. We've run out of room for trophies and plaques in our showcases. The climb is finally over as this report declared to start with. For 2023, we have decided to try something else equally unprecedented and foreign: a concerted effort to slow down and shift gears to focus inwards, through internal initiatives around team dynamics, compensation structure, creating new roles for career advancement, morale, personal growth, recruitment and retention tools, professional training, measurably furthering equity, and the ongoing health and safety of all staff including my own.

As Fleet Superintendent I am immensely proud of the people in my division who operate with a high level of integrity in defending the City's interests in an epically ethically corrupt and incompetent automotive industry, while Madison as a customer often does not receive the service levels or respect afforded to bigger city fleets, which is frustrating to no end. We must also plow through the confines of City government processes, fierce institutional inertia that makes change twice as hard, and irrational municipal labor structures that are notoriously challenging to navigate.

The Fleet team has largely responded to the high expectations set for them through the road bumps for us to methodically climb out of mediocrity. We've built a championship senior staff from scratch through aggressive promotions and outside hires in the last few years at a time when every single accomplishment listed above was just an idea in the ether, by no means a given. We've persisted through a revolving door of team members coming in and out due to retirements, philosophical disagreements and performance issues. Buckets of sweat equity spilled along the way, with a series of serious problems exacting a toll on our collective health and mental health. In particular we and our families managed to power through a stressful and frightening pandemic period, especially for those of us who work in essential services like public works and emergency response with life safety implications and no option to work from home like many of our colleagues from other workplaces. I applaud the courage of my team for coming through without a single complaint.

Madison now punches far above our weight in this important technical field, as we have used our relatively small size to pretend we are a startup company. Though I'll freely admit I can't change engine oil or wield a torque wrench, our elaborate IT systems, data management, unrivaled operational control, and deep personal bonds with all types of people across the fleet world serve us well. But there's much we cannot take for granted, for the conditions of success are always so delicate in nature. I am blessed to love my Fleet team. I also love the other City agencies we back and also have our back, many friends throughout the City government at all levels, my work, my role in the larger organization, my workplace environment, my community, my numerous external partners, and the people who support the division from above. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway is a steady leader for difficult times who has seen me at my best and also not so much, and somehow allows me to keep scheming. Deputy Mayor Katie Crawley has the kindest heart in all of Madison, and by no coincidence will always be most responsible for my move to Wisconsin alongside Mayor Paul Soglin. Public Works Team Leader & Streets Superintendent Charlie Romines has been the sounding board for road mapping our mutual future. I'd also like to recognize the [special team I was part of for 16 years](#) out East within New York City's uniquely strange, never dull, always dynamic, gloriously motley behemoth of a local government [led by Public Fleet Hall of Famer Keith Kerman and other great friends](#). I continue to have deep affection for NYC Parks and NYC Fleet, and will always miss New York City; after all it's the second best town in the world. ;)

In Madison we shall not rest until we achieve our nearly impossible 2030 goals of eliminating fossil fuels from our fleet, and erasing all traffic fatalities from Madison's streets as part of [our Vision Zero plan](#). Until [every Madison vehicle owner rolls in an EV](#). These worthy aspirations way beyond what Fleet is "supposed" to do will take many people working together every day for 8 more years straight. Meanwhile it has been the great honor of my career to be a part of two separate top Vision Zero plans in [New York City](#) and also Madison from inception that have already saved lives in both communities.

Fleet has established itself at the highest levels, but it's not going to be easy from here. The breakneck pace of change in this modern age of high technology we were born into is exciting, unstoppable, frightening, and even dangerous. Fleet will stay firmly on the front lines rather than being disrupted by the change. In fact we are the ones to bring that disruption instead.

This report was written for fun on a weekend. I wish everyone would reach the heights of job satisfaction and career fulfillment I enjoy. In [our first biennial report](#) I hinted that this next one would be worth waiting for. Well you still ain't seen nothing yet, as we have barely scratched the surface of what Fleet is going to accomplish in the future. Wherever in the world or metaverse you are viewing this screen right now, I cordially invite you to continue following our progress and join us in advancing our ambitious endeavors, for we are only as strong as the alliances we cultivate and can go absolutely nowhere without this secret sauce.

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*In fond memory of [Lenin Fiero, my widely loved deputy and successor at NYC Fleet](#) taken from us far too soon in the early days of COVID19; 1977-2020. You laugh in my office every day, your hips rhythmically swaying side to side *con la musica de salsa*. RIP heroe, mi amigo, y gracias mucho.*