

CASE STUDY: AIRPORT SHUTTLE NEW ORLEANS

BACKGROUND

Airport Shuttle New Orleans is the official ground transportation company for the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, and carries approximately 35,000 passengers annually. Since the company operates its shuttles in an intensively metro environment and runs them daily for multiple shifts, managing fuel costs and maintaining performance are critical to their operation.

In the early 1990's the company had experimented with propane-powered vehicles, so they were familiar with the fuel cost savings and reduced vehicle maintenance schedule that result from switching to propane autogas. Then, in 2007, new advances in vehicle technology made switching to autogas truly viable and practical for their business. They selected Alliance AutoGas as their supplier for conversion of their Ford vans because of its comprehensive approach to conversion of fleet vehicles to autogas.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Airport Shuttle now runs 24 of their 30 vehicles on propane autogas using the Prins VSI bi-fuel system from Alliance AutoGas founding partner, American Alternative Fuel, saving roughly \$122,300 annually.

"The price differential makes autogas a very attractive alternative fuel; so, when we looked at how quickly we would reach a return on investment, it was a no-brainer," said Don Duvernay, General Manager of Airport Shuttle. "Eventually, all our vehicles will be running on autogas."

Eager to demonstrate good environmental stewardship by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly those attributable to airport operations, the company was also impressed with the 20% reduction in harmful emissions achieved by autogas-powered vehicles.

WORKING WITH ALLIANCE AUTOGAS

Airport Shuttle worked with Alliance AutoGas (which American Alternative Fuel and Blossman Gas co-founded) to launch their autogas program. The American Alternative Fuel system was recommended by a local dealer, and Duvernay was attracted by Blossman's reputation for reliable and friendly service. Headquartered locally, Blossman is also known for its 60-year record of service excellence in the region.

The bi-fuel component of the conversion system is critical to Airport Shuttle; it gives drivers the ability to operate on gasoline if necessary. Duvernay also noted that the cost of the Prins VSI system from American Alternative Fuel is more affordable than other competing technologies available today.

When a fleet vehicle reaches the end of its useful life, the Prins system is transferable to the next-generation vehicle, which also means that the vehicle being retired can be re-sold in its original OEM configuration. This is an important advantage for Airport Shuttle, which typically replaces vehicles on a four-year cycle.



Don Duvernay,
General Manager
New Orleans, LA

FLEET STATISTICS

FLEET TYPE: Shuttle Service

PERCENT OF FLEET RUNNING ON AUTOGAS: 80%

AUTOGAS VEHICLES IN FLEET: 24

TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL SAVINGS: \$122,304 in fuel savings and \$7,200 in maintenance savings

ADDITIONAL VEHICLES SLATED FOR AUTOGAS CONVERSION: 6

ANTICIPATED ANNUAL USAGE (gallons of autogas): 124,800 gallons

ANNUAL MILEAGE: 60,000

AUTOGAS FUELING: Onsite autogas fueling infrastructure, including one 2,500-gallon autogas tank

TIME OPERATING ON AUTOGAS: 3 years

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WORKING WITH ALLIANCE AUTOGAS (CONTINUED)

For the most convenient and economical vehicle re-fueling process, Blossman Gas installed a 2,500-gallon tank and typical pump onsite at no upfront cost to the fleet. Blossman also manages fuel supply for the autogas station, which fills vehicle tanks in the same time required to fill up with conventional gasoline. Duvernay cites excellent service and training from Alliance AutoGas:

If we have an issue, they are here, dedicated to meeting our needs. Some people are unfamiliar with autogas, but Alliance has done a great job overcoming all that. All drivers have been trained on how to fuel properly and safely.

Alliance AutoGas even sent personnel from Blossman Gas, to come in and answer questions from the drivers, and get them comfortable with the technology. The Blossman guys are subject matter experts and they've seen it all before. They have been a very good partner to us, always taking care of us and willing to work with us to make this thing go.

RESULTS AND AUTOGAS BENEFITS

Because Airport Shuttle New Orleans deploys their vehicles almost entirely in a metro setting and runs their air-conditioning during all operational hours for at least 7 months of the year, their gasoline consumption is considerably higher than with typical highway driving. Higher gasoline consumption means their total savings resulting from conversion to autogas are also higher. Since converting 80% of their fleet vehicles, the company is achieving annual fuel cost savings of \$122,300.

Additionally, the high octane rating of autogas, coupled with clean-burning combustion, yields cleaner oil and longer lasting engine filters, making autogas a great alternative from a maintenance perspective. Duvernay estimates that Airport Shuttle has reduced standard vehicle maintenance by half. With 24 autogas-powered vehicles, that's a reduction from 288 oil changes per year to 144, a savings of roughly \$7,200.

Beyond the tremendous cost savings, using autogas benefits the environment and contributes to American energy security. These far-reaching benefits made autogas an ideal fuel for Airport Shuttle according to Duvernay, who equates "going green" with corporate responsibility. "We do it because it's the right thing to do, it saves us money, and it makes us good corporate citizens. It's great from all three angles, and it has been a good choice for us."

Duvernay also notes that customers love to see the company doing their part for the environment and using American-made fuel. They get particularly good press for this and positive feedback from younger patrons.

MOVING FORWARD

Airport Shuttle is extremely satisfied with the benefits they are experiencing as a result of these 24 conversions; Duvernay and his team are eager to get the remaining six fleet vehicle conversions underway.

As an early adopter of this alternative technology, Duvernay would like to see "a bigger push for this alternative fuel among automakers. It would be beneficial to both fleets and individual consumers." He also hopes for wider autogas adoption in the future. "The more available this becomes, in terms of access, the more beneficial it will be for everyone."