



ASK Transit

Inquiry on Minibus Use and Evaluation

Information compiled on March 5, 2010

The Question: For those of you who have decided not to utilize mini-vans for your Dial A Ride fleets, why? Was it performance, durability, life of vehicle or something else? Was there an evaluation done by your agency on why not to use mini-vans and if so, would you be willing to share that reasoning?

Asotin County says ...We have not had to opportunity to use vans.

Columbia County Public Transportation says...We have never discussed or addressed this issue.

Everett Transit says... We originally went away from the mini vans (cut aways) because of the seat/steering wheel/air bag issues. We went to a heavier vehicle with a longer life. At this time, we are considering smaller vans again – (not cut aways) for our ambulatory riders.

Grant Transit says...GTA uses minivans in the delivery of both para and fixed route service. Works well in our rural service area. We are planning on increasing the minivan fleet.

Grays Harbor Transit says...Grays Harbor never considered using vans so no evaluation was ever conducted

Intercity Transit says... I don't believe we've investigated advantages/disadvantages of utilizing mini-vans in our fleet fully. We have stuck with cutaway El Dorado's primarily for consistency in our fleet. Diesel engines do last longer. The average life of our cutaway vans is 8 years or 200K miles vs. mini-vans (in vanpool for example) are 6 years or 100K miles.

Mini-vans are obviously less costly to manufacture/purchase/operate. We wouldn't rule out utilizing them in the future, but don't think we're there just yet. With ride scheduling software customizable to show differences in vehicle specs, it would make scheduling rides to vans of different capacities easier; this eliminates the need for overkill on consistency in the fleet.

Island Transit says...We have mini vans for supervisors, but use 22' 8 passenger Pacers for the small Paratransit trips. No evaluation done.

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Jefferson Transit says.... We do use mini-vans and we love them.

Kitsap Transit says... We use minivans. We have places that we cannot access with buses.

Link Transit says... We continue to use minivans, but are supplementing a portion of the fleet with Sprinters for more capacity and same operating cost.

Mason Transit says... We do not use mini-vans at all in the fleet simply because of route vs. dial a ride vehicle assignments and capacity issues both for ADA and general ridership.

Pacific Transit says...we have always used cutaway vans and we intend to continue to do so.

Pierce Transit says...The mini-bus cab on chassis vehicle provides better vehicle life and flexibility in terms of number of wheelchair positions vs. ambulatory seats.

Pullman Transit says...We had a minivan in our Dial-A-Ride fleet for a short time and I have worked with several other agencies that have them currently and they and we all have experienced the same thing. The ride is nice and the functionality is good for these uses, but the actual frame structure, under carriage and van components could not take the abuse of the road and the job that was entailed in it. To put it bluntly – “they were in the shop more than one the road”. This is an across the board consensus with us and others who are currently using them; Ideal for the situation, but not built strong enough for the purpose of daily transportation needs. Thus, probably not a good substitute for vehicles that are built for this use.

Skagit Transit says... We have not used mini-vans for more than ten years. We had scheduling limitations with the smaller vans and driver complaints about bending over and hurting their backs. The life expectancy on a van is 4-5 years now. We can keep a cut-away style vehicle seven years or more; can carry more passengers and greater weight of passenger/chairs. We have an all-diesel fleet of revenue vehicles.

Spokane Transit says...Cut away vans have reduced our employee injury rates substantially.

Valley Transit says... We have considered using mini vans in our Dial-A-Ride service; however, they do not have a large enough passenger capacity for our current needs.

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Whatcom Transit says...We haven't considered mini-vans for our paratransit fleet because we need a higher-capacity vehicle format as a minimum standard for that fleet.

Yakima Transit says...We use a mixed fleet of vehicles; sedans, mini-vans and cut-aways in an effort to provide the best service possible, utilizing the lowest cost type of vehicle available.

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