



Case Study

City of Minot, ND

The City of Minot, North Dakota was established in 1886, when the Great Northern Railroad ended its push through the state for the winter months. Known since as the Magic City, Minot has a storied history, from its early years as a western boom town to its current form as a vibrant and resilient community constantly improving opportunities while preserving its heritage.

Supporting the city is the Vehicle Maintenance team, led by Vehicle Maintenance Superintendent Brian Horinka. In 2020, the team at Minot chose to implement AssetWorks FleetFocus fleet management system to modernize operations and improve efficiencies.

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Before FleetFocus

Before implementing AssetWorks FleetFocus, the city used a system originally purchased in the 1980s for all city functions, including vehicle maintenance tracking, purchasing and inventory, and financials. While the system was computerized, many of the team's necessary processes were paper based. On the use of paper forms, Mr. Horinka said, “With anything paper, things can get lost or damaged, especially in a shop area.”

After deciding to modernize the system, they began looking for a new asset management system to be used by the Public Works Department. After the RFP process, the City of Minot selected AssetWorks FleetFocus.

“From the vehicle maintenance side of the house,” Mr. Horinka said, “I felt that AssetWorks was going to give us the best bang for our buck to help us improve our services, keep track of things, and make our shop more efficient.”

The Importance of Good Data

When the software deployment process began, the Minot team had to prepare the data within their existing system to be uploaded into the FleetFocus system. For most fleet maintenance teams, this process is challenging, especially when extracting data from an older system. “Our previous system was quite antiquated, which was one of my issues with it originally,” said Mr. Horinka. “We could put data in but couldn't get it out in any usable fashion to help me manage my shop.”

To make matters more complex for the Minot team, the software deployment process also coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which shifted meetings and training sessions that would typically be done in-person to a virtual platform.

Luckily, the IT Department at the City of Minot took the challenges in stride and was able to extract and reconfigure the data necessary for the software deployment. “We're very lucky to have a talented IT team,” said Mr. Horinka, “We couldn't have done it without them.”

Advice for New FleetFocus Customers

As the data was being added to the system, the Minot team decided to go live with FleetFocus before all interfaces were officially complete. “It was the best decision we could have made because we were able to work in the AssetWorks system for about two months [before all interfaces went live], which helped us understand more of what we needed to extract and the data we have to tie into our financial programs.”

This decision led to one of Mr. Horinka’s top pieces of advice from the deployment process. When asked what he would tell a fleet about to begin their own software deployment project, he said, “Get up and running on [the system] a little bit and get your hands in the system. Play with it. Find everything out you can about it, and then look at what you need to do to coordinate with your other software packages. It definitely was the right way to go.”

Understanding Change Management

Mr. Horinka’s team is small, but powerful. The team, consisting of four mechanics, a welder, a light mechanic, a foreman, and two parts storeroom staff members, manages and maintains about 775 different pieces of equipment for the City of Minot. “We take care of anything with an engine or wheels with the exception of the fire department,” he said.

The introduction of a new software system to any size team will present challenges as the staff members adjust to the new technology, but Mr. Horinka made the important decision to involve his team as early in the process as possible, even before they officially selected FleetFocus as the vendor. “I talked about it at every opportunity. I kept them involved all the way from when we put out the RFP to when we selected AssetWorks,” he said.

Transparency and communication were key to a successful deployment for the Minot team. “I never downplayed the challenges,” said Mr. Horinka. “There were going to be tough times, but in the end, it’s going to be so much better. [The team] will be more efficient with time and with the information we’re going to get out of the system.”

Another key to success for the Minot team was building excitement for the new system, which was made easier when Thomas Mair, Professional Services Team Lead at AssetWorks, was able to come on-site for training. “Change is scary for everyone, but Thomas and his team did a fantastic job on the training, which was a big help towards keeping their attitudes up.”

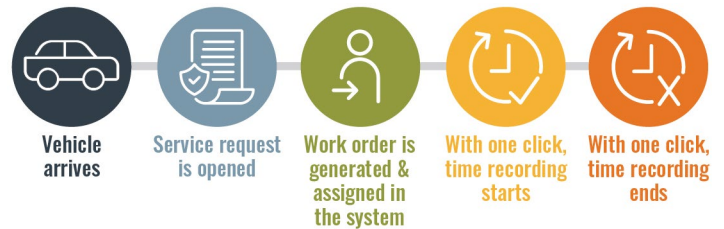
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The AssetWorks team took a hands-on approach to training, so even Minot team members with little computer experience were able to not just learn how

to use FleetFocus, but also basic computer functions they weren’t used to using. “Thomas and his team were extremely patient and very knowledgeable,” said Mr. Horinka.

Streamlining the Day-to-Day Workflows

Since going live with FleetFocus, the Minot team’s day-to-day operations have changed for the better. The processes that used to take many paper forms and manual data entry can now be done digitally in the system, with information being updated in real-time. With four mechanics and 775 pieces of equipment to maintain, the mechanics typically have three to four projects going on at one time, so the streamlined processes within FleetFocus save them a lot of time.



“Now, when somebody brings a vehicle in, the foreman opens up a service request, generates a work order, and assigns it to a mechanic right in the system. When the mechanic comes in in the morning, he sees his assignments, opens it up, hits that nice little button to start his time and goes to work. When he’s done, he hits that handy little button and shuts his time off. He doesn’t have to keep track of how long he’s been working on the job, he doesn’t have to keep track of all his paperwork.”

Periodic maintenance functions have also improved with the FleetFocus system. In the old system, the periodic maintenance was not tracked correctly, resulting in the foreman having to spend four to five hours each Monday going through the list of maintenance requirements due to inaccuracies. “It was very time consuming and labor intensive,” explained Mr. Horinka. “Now, we don’t have that problem!”

Improving the Preventive Maintenance Program

A major focus for the Minot team is improving their preventive maintenance programs. According to Mr. Horinka and his foreman, the FleetFocus system will be a huge asset in that area. After inputting their fleet data into the system, they were able to identify pieces of equipment with lower utilization. “We would find trailers, pumps, and other assets that only come out on the rare occasions when they are needed that hadn’t been serviced in a long time,” explained Mr. Horinka.

After reviewing the data, the team was able to pull those assets in for long overdue inspections.

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Using Data to Justify Funding

Data is the backbone of any modern fleet organization. Since going live with FleetFocus, the Minot team has focused on improving their data quality, leading to better results from the system. “If we don’t put good information into it, we’re not going to get good information out of it,” said Mr. Horinka.

With good data in the system, the team at Minot can justify any requests to the City Council. “We know that we’re busy and we know that we do the work,” Mr. Horinka explained, “But when you talk to City Council about needing an additional mechanic or piece of equipment, they need to know why we need them on paper. That’s where [FleetFocus] comes in.”

When the system is used to the best of its ability with accurate data inputs, the ability to prove a need for staffing or new equipment is made that much easier.

A Customizable Solution for Unique Fleet Needs

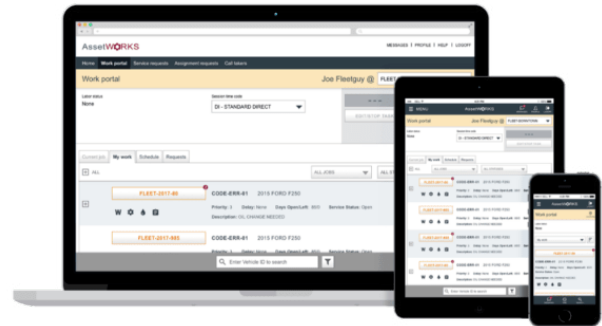
One of the major factors the team at Minot considered when selecting AssetWorks FleetFocus was the customizable nature of the system. “There are so many things in the system where I can change or add a field if I need to or add additional information that we need to track here that other fleets don’t,” said Mr. Horinka.

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An example of customization that the City of Minot requires is for the snow season. “When the snow starts falling, it’s nice to be able to quickly and easily find out how much money we’re spending on snow removal equipment or how much it cost us to clean up after a particular snow event,” he continued.

It can be difficult for fleet organizations to manage all aspects of a weather emergency, with many data points and documents to track. FleetFocus allows the Minot team to track the right data for FEMA reimbursements.

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Attending the AssetWorks Academy

Each year the AssetWorks team hosts the AssetWorks Academy user conference for FleetFocus customers. Mr. Horinka was able to attend the virtual Academy conference during the COVID-19 pandemic even before the City of Minot invested in the system. “[Attending the Academy] helped me ask smarter questions during the deployment phase because I wasn’t seeing the software for the first time,” he explained. “I would recommend anybody to attend as well in order to find out as much information as you can in advance of deployment. Attending the Academy, even as a brand-new customer, can provide many benefits, including hands-on sessions, one-on-one time with AssetWorks staff, and networking with other AssetWorks software users.

FleetFocus and the City of Minot: A Team Effort

Across the entire process, the City of Minot’s journey with FleetFocus was a true team effort, with dozens of people across different departments doing their part to ensure the project’s success. From City Engineer Lance Meyer spearheading the RFP process and securing the funding, and the IT department working to move data from the old system to the FleetFocus system, to the Finance department attending meetings and training sessions to ensure compatibility between all systems.

Investing in a new fleet software system isn’t a small task, and the Vehicle Maintenance team at the City of Minot proved to be up for the challenge and more. “I’ve got one of the best shops in the state,” said Mr. Horinka. “There’s nothing they can’t do if they put their mind to it, and they proved that by how seamlessly we went through the system.”

To learn more about AssetWorks FleetFocus, please visit assetworks.com/fleet.