

## **Problems with Highway Outsourcing of Plow Truck Building and Failure to Hire Mechanics**

The highway department is proposing to subcontract the construction of its snow plow trucks to two out-of-county subcontractors. This build-out work is currently performed by 2-3 mechanic/builders in the County's own shops with some purchased parts and many parts that we fabricate to meet our needs. We believe this work is best done in-house for the following reasons.

1. Most trucks built by vendors last for 6 to 8 years of service. Our trucks are built with heavier materials and better-quality equipment. Our trucks are built to last much longer. We build a heavy-duty truck, with heavier materials (thicker steel, fasteners, SS, etc.) than truck building vendors. We build them to withstand the unfortunate contact with pavement heaving, bridge gaps, railroad crossing and other obstacles as well as the regular contact with road salt. As a result, our trucks remain in service for 15 to 20+ years, which is 2-3x the life of outsource-built trucks we have worked with in the past.
2. We build trucks using stainless steel (SS) lines and higher-quality, thicker fittings to reduce repair costs and to allow for longer equipment life. Subcontractors use lower quality hydraulic lines, fittings, and wiring. The bids don't require the top-quality parts we use.
3. Subcontractors also don't worry about routing and locating equipment, fittings, and pumps in places where they can be easily serviced like we do. This would make it much more difficult for us to service and to repair these vehicles because we won't have those spare parts on hand and we won't be familiar with their assembly, making Winter repair times longer when we really need the trucks for plowing operations.
4. Dane County snowplow fabrication includes modification of the purchased equipment for optimal performance based on repair experience and feedback from the operators. This quality and knowledge are lost with a subcontracted builder, making the trucks underperform and maintenance more expensive.
5. Dane County fabricators build templates for the parts to fabricate a snow plow truck. We can fabricate more parts when they are broken or not available anymore. If subcontractors build the supporting parts, we won't have them and we won't have the templates to build them. This could render trucks obsolete earlier and will result in longer delays for future repairs.
6. We also take preventive measures such as using SS fasteners, never-seize, paint, rustproofing behind interior panels and extra undercoat to ensure less rust from the salt, longer life, and easier disassembly for future repairs. Subcontractors would not know, or care, to take these extra steps. They build trucks more quickly, for profit, and for a shorter lifespan. It would cost extra time and money when the trucks need repairs and cannot be easily disassembled, repaired and reassembled.
7. The proposal to build trucks in Green County would also add new problems obtaining warranty work on the build and would require more time and money to transport the

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trucks back and forth. We would also be less able to charge this time to snow and ice removal for State reimbursement, thus increasing the subcontracting costs further in ways not apparent in the bid itself.

8. For example, the truck dealerships have not able to do timely warranty and non-warrantable repairs and in the winter, and there have been waiting periods of up to two-weeks at times in 2019 when we have sent trucks back to the dealership for warranty powertrain work. They are having problems hiring mechanics and are understaffed. Warranty work on the build-outs would subject us to an additional source for these long delays.
9. Monroe Trucks, one of the winning bidders, has done suspect build-out work in the past that we had to redo/replace. They recently built-out a specialized paint truck that was not built properly and that required additional work by our shop after delivery.
10. Although other departments use subcontractors to build trucks, our trucks are special because they are CNG trucks and these subcontractors are not building many CNG highway plow trucks for other counties or companies. The location of the tanks on CNG trucks (behind the cab) pushes the box further back and requires special considerations to ensure that the front of the truck isn't light when fully loaded with the plows down making it difficult to steer. We have learned about the unique needs of our special Dane County CNG trucks and we make these accommodations, but the subcontractors do not.
11. When our trucks are out of service in winter storms, it reduces the safety of our crew and the public when older, less effective equipment must be used. Dealerships are also not familiar with snow removal equipment and have caused more repairs after servicing equipment.

For all of these reasons, we ask you to reject the Department's short-sighted proposal to subcontract the build-out of Dane County trucks to out-of-county, distant sub-contractors who lack the experience and commitment to our County's roads. We firmly believe that any initial projected savings will end up costing our County over the long-haul in shorter lived, poorer quality, and underperforming trucks. We also believe that this will hurt the Department's ability to serve our community and commerce when we are most needed during dangerous weather.