

# Walker converts single-use trucks to multi-use trucks

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A year ago the Walker Department of Public Works needed to purchase a new truck to put its traffic sign work platform on. The truck is used to make repairs to existing traffic signs or install new traffic signs in the city. The old truck was built on a standard truck chassis but DPW director Mark Koning wanted to use a larger truck chassis for the new truck.

"A new truck would have cost us at least \$80,000 fully equipped and that was something we couldn't afford this year," Koning said.



ADVANCE photos by JEFFREY CUNNINGHAM  
The A-frames that go under the equipment are simple and cost \$2,500. In the background is the salt box that is used in the winter to spread salt.

Instead of purchasing a new truck, DPW employees brought a plan to convert one of the city's current salt trucks to a multi-use truck that could have any number of uses over the course of the year. "We saw a system in another community that used light trucks and allowed them to change the box on the back to a platform or something else," said DPW employee Tom Klein. "We took about a year to design a system like that for one of our dump trucks and it turned out that it worked well."

The system installed on the truck chassis is similar

to what waste haulers use to move large trash bins.

The multi-use truck can now be used to haul the sign platform, salt truck, a chloride tank is being constructed, a dump truck, and several other uses are being designed. "The uses for this truck are endless," Klein said. "Anything we can design and build we can use because the cost of building new applications are low."

The A-frame to attach the piece of equipment to the truck costs \$2,500, Koning said. "So far we have been able to reuse parts so the cost really is minimal."

Assistant City Manager Darrel Schmalzel said not purchasing new trucks and finding ways to use one truck more than one way is just one of the savings of the new system.

"It is not that we haven't had to purchase single-use trucks - we have been able to actually reduce the number of trucks in our fleet," Schmalzel said. "We are also able to use the trucks in our fleet to their fullest. These trucks are now tailor-made for the needs of the department.



This former salt truck has been converted to now be able to change from a salt truck to a sign platform truck to any number of uses in a matter of minutes.

The cost savings are in purchasing, insurance, and repairs, and not having to find more garage space. The guys in the DPW are always looking for ways to be more efficient."

He estimates that by going this route, the city has saved at least

\$150,000. A second dump truck is currently being converted to a multi-use truck.

Koning said that he has had inquiries from officials from other communities about the system. "We are not the first department to do something like this in Michi-

gan, but I think we are one of the first to use dump trucks and that seems to have caught people's attention," he said. "Why have a single-use truck sit in the garage for months every year when you can use a system like this and use that truck all year long?"