



CITY OF ATLANTA
City Auditor's Office
Amanda Noble, City Auditor
404.330.6750

August 2024

Performance Audit:

Fire Fleet Maintenance

What We Found

Public Works did not have an existing fleet replacement strategy, resulting in the city using fire vehicles beyond their lifecycles and, in some cases, with significant mechanical issues. Nearly one-third of fire apparatus were beyond their lifecycle, as of January 2024. The fire fleet had only three engines and no ladder trucks in reserve to cover the city, below the number recommended by international standards. In December 2023, Public Works' consultant identified an immediate need to replace 15 fire apparatus. The lead time for purchasing fire apparatus is three to four years.

The city's primary financing source—the GMA (Georgia Municipal Association) revolving loan fund—was inadequate to meet all fleet needs. Between fiscal years 2017 and 2024, the city purchased 30 of 58 fire apparatus approved for purchase. Most of the remaining 28 were not purchased due to insufficient funding. The Government Finance Officers Association recommends governments assess capital asset needs and plan for maintenance and replacement costs, including establishing an ongoing source of funds in the operating budget. One way to accomplish this would be to include a surcharge for equipment replacement in Fleet Services' rates for services.

From 2018 to 2023, Fleet Services met its preventive maintenance service level agreements for fire apparatus 80% of the time, but about 18% of fire apparatus had not received preventive maintenance services for over a year. The age and condition of the fire apparatus can extend service times and affect availability. About 10% of out-of-service repairs took longer than 20 days to complete. During 2022 and 2023, the median number of fire apparatus out-of-service for repairs each day was 12, 21% of the fleet.

Fire and Fleet Services leadership each told us that turnover in the fire shop was a problem. Our review found the shop experienced turnover in 7 of 11 technical positions from 2018 to 2024. Public Works recently adjusted salaries to improve competitiveness.

Why We Did This Audit

We undertook this audit to address concerns about the shortage of fire vehicles.

What We Recommended

To provide a stable funding source for vehicle acquisition, the Public Works commissioner should:

- work with the chief financial officer to review internal service charges and establish a surcharge to fund future vehicle acquisition

To ensure that fire apparatus are operational and maintenance staff qualifications are documented, the Public Works commissioner should:

- require Fleet Services fire shop staff to ensure preventive maintenance checklists are completed, maintained, reviewed, and approved
- require fire shop technicians to maintain certification and training documentation according to job requirements and NFPA standards

To improve inventory processes, the Public Works commissioner should:

- organize the storeroom and implement a periodic inventory process; and document approval of the assignment of parts to Fire vehicles when used for repairs

To ensure apparatus are properly maintained and to comply with city policies, the fire chief should:

- work with the Public Works Commissioner to implement the replacement plan and follow Fleet Services' policies regarding vehicle purchase requests
- update existing apparatus specification and inspection policies
- develop a process in Operative IQ to ensure documentation of the officer-in-charge's review and approval of completed inspections

For more information regarding this report, please use the "contact" link on our website at www.atlaudit.org

Management Responses to Audit Recommendations

Summary of Management Responses		
Recommendation #1: We recommend that the Public Works commissioner work with the chief financial officer to review the adequacy of current charges for preventive maintenance and repair services and establish a surcharge structure that would be used to fund future vehicle acquisition costs to ensure the sustainability of the city's fleet management program.		
Response: Agree	Status: Not Started	Estimated Completion Date July 2025
Recommendation #2: We recommend the Public Works commissioner require the Fleet Services fire shop staff to ensure preventive maintenance checklists are complete, maintained, reviewed, and approved.		
Response: Agree	Status: Partly Implemented	Estimated Completion Date September 2024
Recommendation #3: We recommend the Public Works commissioner require the fire shop technicians to maintain certification documentation according to job requirements in their human resources files and complete training according to NFPA standards.		
Response: Agree	Status: Started	Estimated Completion Date November 2024
Recommendation #4: We recommend the Public Works commissioner require the fire shop staff to organize the storeroom and implement a process to ensure an inventory of the parts is conducted periodically with a supervisor review and signoff of the listing.		
Response: Agree	Status: Started	Estimated Completion Date September 2024
Recommendation #5: We recommend the Public Works commissioner ensure the fire shop establishes a process to document the approval of the assignment of parts to Fire vehicles when used for repairs.		
Response: Agree	Status: Partly Implemented	Estimated Completion Date September 2024

<p>Recommendation #6: We recommend that the fire chief require staff to adhere to Fleet Services' policies regarding vehicle purchase requests.</p>		
<p>Response: Partially Agree</p>	<p>Status: Started</p>	<p>Estimated Completion Date September 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #7: We recommend that the fire chief work with the Public Works Commissioner to ensure the replacement plan for fire vehicles is adequate so that new fire apparatus can be purchased timely to replace older vehicles that can be either retired or moved into reserve status.</p>		
<p>Response: Agree</p>	<p>Status: Partly Implemented</p>	<p>Estimated Completion Date September 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #8: We recommend the fire chief ensure the Apparatus Specifications Committee adheres to policies and ensures the committee includes staff across both Fire and Fleet Services, as well as documenting committee meeting minutes.</p>		
<p>Response: Agree</p>	<p>Status: Not Started</p>	<p>Estimated Completion Date September 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #9: We recommend the fire chief update current policy to include the use of Operative IQ for apparatus inspections.</p>		
<p>Response: Agree</p>	<p>Status: Not Started</p>	<p>Estimated Completion Date September 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #10: We recommend the fire chief ensure the inspection questionnaires are updated in Operative IQ and that a process is developed to ensure the officer-in-charge review and approval of the completed questionnaires is documented.</p>		
<p>Response: Agree</p>	<p>Status: Started</p>	<p>Estimated Completion Date September 2024</p>