

Car 54 Where Are You?

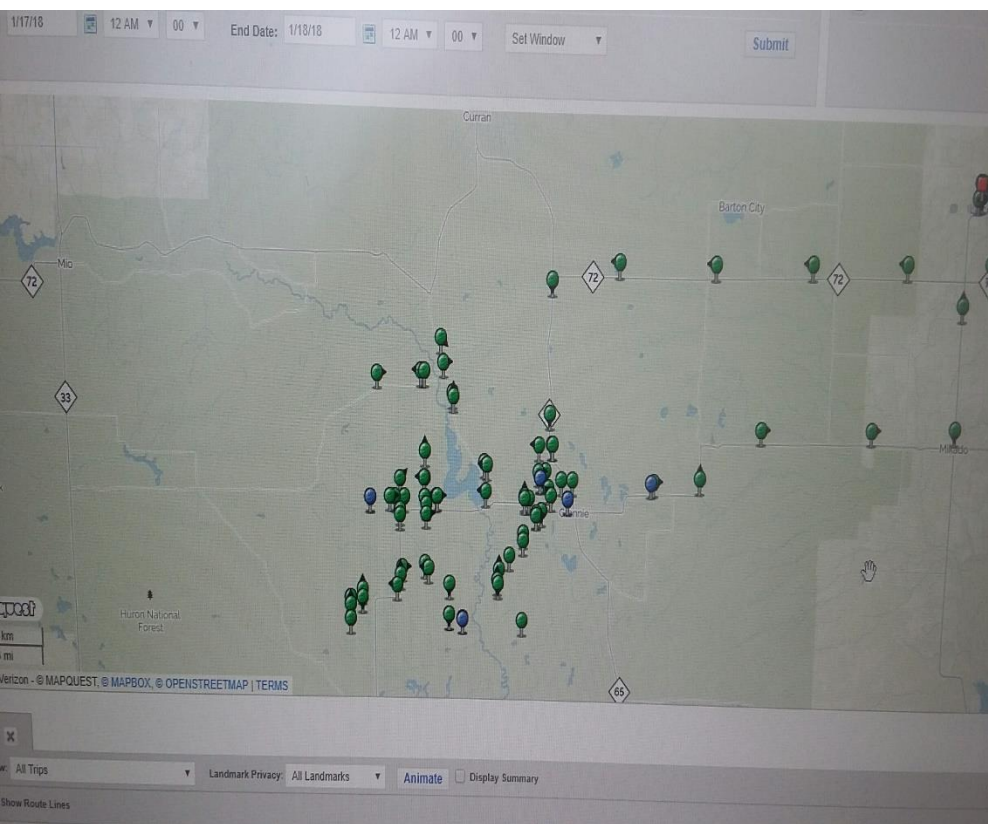
In an old television police comedy, the dispatcher who repeatedly called to determine the location of patrol car 54 might have appreciated the monitoring devices that have recently been installed on some Alcona County Road Commission trucks.

According to Managing Director Jesse Campbell, while not intended to be locating devices, the devices will be used to track and log data to determine operational and mechanical efficiencies. The data that is collected is transmitted via cell-phone-based technology to a data base accessible for up-to-the-minute or post-operation monitoring.

On-board computers in newer trucks in the Road Commission's fleet collect data such as fuel consumption, driver characteristics, engine performance and diagnostics, as well as location



1 the unit that is installed in the truck/not much bigger than a cell phone



2 map showing plowing activities for 1-17-18

“Location monitoring may be more likely used during the winter months,” says Campbell. Campbell explains a map showing the real-time location of trucks helps in the assessment of the progress of snowplowing efforts. Based on that information, it can be determined whether plowing is on schedule, if additional crew and equipment need to be deployed to the area, or if extending the work day will be necessary.

Campbell points out that the diagnostic capabilities are the most important attributes offered by the devices. He says that while fuel consumption is difficult to compare from one truck to another because of weather conditions, fuel usage data for individual trucks is useful in forecasting future fuel costs.

Engine function data including temperature, RPMs, hydraulic pressure, oil/fluid pressures, shifting patterns, etc. will help in calibrations and adjustments to ensure maximum efficiency. Such data might also influence specifications for future trucks.

Most remarkably, the devices are ‘friendly’ with the truck’s own computerized monitoring system and will actually transmit an alert before the truck indicates a service engine soon or other system failure warning. Campbell says the synchronization also ramps up an already vigilant preventive maintenance program

because the new devices extract such stats as engine hours and send a message when services need to be scheduled.

“This technology allows us to be more scientific in our approach to our operation,” says Campbell. “Now, we can use real statistics to decide if we’re selecting the most practical machinery and using it in the most efficient way possible. Plus, it helps us to take even better care of our equipment.”

“The eight units purchased so far cost about \$110 each and there is a monthly subscription fee of \$18.95,” reports Campbell. He says many road commissions across the state have been using this technology with the outcome justifying the costs over time.

“It’s a small investment compared to the anticipated efficiencies we can bring about.”

The Alcona County Road Commission maintains over 700 miles of roads to get you where you want to go. Questions or concerns about road equipment or road issues, should be directed to the Alcona County Road Commission at 301 N. Lake Street, P.O. Box 40, Lincoln, Michigan 48742, by phone at 989-736-8168 or by e-mail at roads@alconacrc.com