



The U.S. Postal Service keeps chugging along in its quest to find an electric delivery truck, and it has enlisted the help of two outfits for the final part of its study. One of them, AC Propulsion, is well-known within the EV community. The other, AutoPort, is the company that gets to do the heavy lifting.

The companies will work together on the engineering, development and conversion of a conventional mail truck to electric power, one of five ideas the Postal Service is considering to begin electrifying its fleet of 142,000 vehicles. Once the truck is built and tested, it will see duty on the streets of Washington, D.C. AC Propulsion CEO Tom Gage is confident his truck will measure up.

“We are thrilled to partner with AutoPort to present a long-term solution to the U.S. Postal Service,” he said in a statement. “Our solution provides the safety and performance required by the USPS, and it will reduce cost, increase efficiency and improve driveability for the mail carriers.”

Gage and his crew are no strangers to the EV game.

Gage and Alan Cocconi were the guys who thought up an electric sports car that offered awesome performance and impressive range. That car was the [T Zero](#), which did zero to 60 in 3.8 seconds and offered a range of 200 miles using commodity lithium-ion cells. If it sounds familiar, it should — [Martin Eberhard and Elon Musk](#) urged them to produce the car, but they declined. Eberhard and Musk went on to bring us the Tesla Roadster. Gage and Cocconi went on to develop the eBox, a [Toyota Scion converted to electric power](#), because they felt it was more practical. Further boosting the company’s cred, BMW tapped AC Propulsion to help develop the [Mini-E electric car](#).

As for AutoPort, it is an automotive conversion and restyling center that, among other things, does fleet conversions.

Together the two firms will strip the engine, transmission and other components from a conventional mail truck — the venerable Grumman LLV, or “Long Life Vehicle” — like the one in the pic and install an AC Propulsion [AC-150 drive system](#). It’s an integrated electric-propulsion system that includes an AC induction motor, inverter, charger and 12-volt power supply with vehicle-to-grid capability built in. The system is good for up to 200 kilowatts (268 horsepower). As much as we love the idea of a mail truck with that kind of power, it seems unlikely the truck will be that extreme. AC Propulsion claims its system offers a range of up to 300 miles at 60 mph but didn’t provide any specs for the mail truck.

AutoPort will handle the conversion and ensure the vehicle meets the SAE International [Guidelines for Electric Vehicle Safety](#) and the myriad federal motor vehicle safety regs. Once that’s done and the truck completes initial testing, it will hit the streets of Washington for at least a year, so Postal Service brass can monitor carrier satisfaction with the vehicle and its cost of operation and maintenance.

Say what you will about electric vehicles for the rest of us, they make sense for postal carriers. The trucks follow predetermined routes, they’re kept in centralized locations and they driven roughly the same number of miles each day. All of that makes range and recharging a non-issue. The postal service is ideal for electrification, and the impact could be huge because it maintains the largest civilian vehicle fleet in the world.

*Photo of a conventional postal service truck: Flickr / [Beau Owens Photography](#)*

Read More <http://www.wired.com/autopia/2010/01/ac-propulsion-mail-truck/#ixzz0dMQ3h27S>