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ERIE COUNTY FLEET MAINTENANCE CENTERS

SITE AND STAFFING OPTIONS

Prepared for:
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February, 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2003, the firms of Lumsden & McCormick and CGR delivered a report to Erie County titled "Operational Study of Certain Functions of Government." One section of that report recommended that the county should focus on improving management of its fleet of over 1,100 vehicles, and that the county could save from $340,000 - $700,000 annually by doing so. This report augments the February 2003 report by identifying a specific number, location and staffing of garages that could meet the service and response time requirements for county operations.

CGR's conclusion is that Erie County could meet its fleet maintenance service needs while still meeting quick response time objectives by operating as few as eight fleet maintenance garages (not including the City Parks garage): six at current DPW sites that already have garages, the Erie County Medical Center (ECMC) maintenance center, and the Sheriff's garage.

The fleet maintenance staff could be reduced to 35 total positions (34 staff for county operations and 1 for the Sheriff), but this staff should be managed centrally to coordinate the efficient assignment of staff with the appropriate skills to the various garages as needed. As long as county fleet maintenance staff report to three different departments (currently Fleet Management, Parks and DPW), the county will not be able to achieve the type of operating efficiencies identified in this report.

Impact of the County Budget Crisis

This report was completed prior to the county's recent fiscal crisis, which required cutting $108 million from the budget. However, the principles of consolidation described in this report could be

used to guide how the county manages its fleet. In a fiscal emergency, the Sheriff's garage could also be closed down, with service being provided at ECMC and other remaining sites. Rather than having six DPW sites as proposed in the report, DPW and remaining Parks operations fleets could be serviced in the five main DPW district operations centers, although this would slow down emergency vehicle repair response time and create other time delay inefficiencies. Keeping a minimum of six fleet maintenance facilities would at least provide reasonable response time coverage to county DPW and other operations that utilize vehicles in carrying out their functions until sufficient funding becomes available to make the additional investments needed to ensure that the fleet is managed professionally and in a cost-effective manner. Finally, as another option, rather than keeping all of its own fleet maintenance facilities open to service its equipment, the county could consider contracting with towns who have fleet maintenance facilities close to the optimal locations as shown on the maps included in this report.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CGR gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Erie County staff from the Fleet Services, Parks and DPW departments in helping us complete the research and conduct the visits necessary to prepare this report. In particular, Director of Fleet Services Robert Bartholomew provided substantial information and background, along with sharing his extensive knowledge of fleet management operations, helping CGR understand options for improving Erie County's operations. CGR also thanks our architectural consultant, Wendel Duchscherer, particularly David Ketchum, for assistance in developing facilities cost estimates, and our GIS consultant, Bergmann Associates, particularly Jeffrey Volpe and Carol Zollweg, for modeling different site options and preparing the maps showing the optimal site locations. This report was written by Charles Zettek Jr., Director of Government Management Services.

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND

In February 2003, the firms of Lumsden & McCormick and CGR delivered a report to Erie County titled "Operational Study of Certain Functions of Government." One section of that report recommended that the county should focus on improving management of its fleet of over 1,100 vehicles. The report suggested a number of areas for the county to address.

The first recommendation was for the county to hire a full-time Director of Fleet Services to professionalize management of the fleet. A Director was hired in December, 2002, on the basis of interim report recommendations made in mid-2002. CGR was engaged to assist the Director in developing a plan to consolidate fleet management operations into a small number of facilities, as recommended in the February 2003 report. As noted in that report, consolidating maintenance operations would save $190,000 to $400,000 per year by reducing building overhead costs and achieving staffing efficiencies. The additional savings noted in the report would come from efficiently managing the fleet.

Since early 2003, the county has taken a number of significant steps to improve fleet maintenance operations consistent with the recommendations of the February 2003 report. These can be summarized as follows:

- The total number of pieces of equipment in the fleet have been reduced from 1,122 in January 2003 to 1,004 in December, 2004 – a 10.5% reduction, as the Director of Fleet Services has eliminated outdated, inefficient or underutilized equipment,

- Data on usage, repairs and fuel consumption are now being systematically collected and put into a database so that the county can make the most cost-effective decisions to repair or replace equipment,

- Several previous maintenance sites have been closed and consolidated. Erie County sewer fleet maintenance is now done at DPW sites and at the county's ECMC repair shop;

Parks fleet maintenance is now consolidated into two primary sites; Sheriff vehicle maintenance has been centralized at the Alden site, and light vehicle work for both the county and Erie Community College has been centralized at ECMC.

- Both Parks and Fleet Services staff have been used more flexibly to better match staffing with specific repair needs.

In order to move to the next level and achieve the types of efficiencies identified in the February 2003 report, the county needs to take further action to move forward with a fleet management plan. However, several factors have changed since the original report. Three variables, in particular, have created a moving target for developing this plan.

First, operational and facilities plans for the county DPW department have been and remain under development. Of particular relevance to this project, DPW has not settled on a long-term facilities plan. Since fleet maintenance operations are an important part of overall DPW operations, identifying the optimal sites for fleet maintenance shops can't be completed until a long-term DPW facilities plan is adopted.

Second, the relationship of City of Buffalo operations to Erie County operations is currently in a state of flux. In July 2004, the county assumed responsibility for city parks (for a five-year period). This made city parks fleet equipment the responsibility of the county, which took over city parks mechanics and the city parks garage on Delaware Avenue. An even bigger unknown is whether or not the city and the county will merge in the near future. If they do merge, the city's major DPW fleet maintenance center on Broadway, as well as other smaller fleet maintenance sites, would have to be integrated into county fleet operations.

The third variable is staffing and organizational responsibility. The February 2003 report envisioned shifting all fleet maintenance staff found in different departments (primarily DPW and Parks) into the new division of Fleet Services, under the responsibility of the Director of Fleet Services. However, to date, the county has only shifted personnel within the Department of Information and Support Services into the new organization. A dotted line

relationship does exist between the Director of Fleet Services and Parks mechanics, however, DPW mechanics continue to report directly to the district engineers. Staffing the fleet maintenance facilities needs to be resolved before a long-term plan can be implemented.

SECTION 2 – VARIABLES TO BE CONSIDERED

In order to determine the appropriate size, number and location of fleet maintenance facilities for the county, a number of different variables need to be considered. The optimal mix of facilities for the county will depend on both the quantitative factors that are assigned to these variables, and a weighting of these variables as determined by various county decision makers. Since these decision criteria include both quantitative and qualitative measures, the "right" solution for the county will be the solution that makes the most sense after taking into account all the variables.

Four primary variables were considered by CGR in developing this report. Each variable and some key factors for each variable are described below. All of these variables are inter-connected, however, for simplicity, once a major factor is discussed for one variable, it will not be repeated in discussion of another variable.

CGR utilized Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to model alternatives and develop options for the county to consider.

CGR also compared Erie County with five other counties in New York to determine how other counties manage their fleet operations. The counties were selected because they are in snow belts, so snow removal requirements would be somewhat similar to Erie. TABLE 1 shows the comparison counties. Erie is responsible for the largest number of centerline miles by far, but two of the other counties are comparable in land area.

TABLE 1
General Characteristics and Number of Fleet Maintenance Shops in Comparison Counties
Note – Centerline Miles Shown are County Responsibility

County	Centerline Miles	Land Area Sq. Miles	# of Maintenance Shops	Shop Locations Within the County
Chautauqua	545	1,062	1 major, 2 smaller	1 in middle, 2 at corners
Erie	1,179	1,044	7 major 8 smaller	All over the county
Jefferson	555	1,272	1	Near population center
Monroe	651	659	1	Near geographic center
Niagara	283	523	1	Near geographic center
Onondaga	796	780	1 major, 3 smaller	One per quadrant

Variable 1 - Number of Facilities

The number of fleet maintenance facilities for Erie County needs to take into account several factors: 1. the land area and street networks to be covered; 2. the link with other county facilities; 3. available alternatives to county-operated facilities; 4. availability of staff; 5. the number and type of equipment to be serviced, and perhaps most important, 6. the vehicle maintenance philosophy of the county. To determine the optimal number of facilities, the county needs to strike the right balance among all of these factors.

Vehicle Maintenance Philosophy

The vehicle maintenance philosophy of a county affects the number, location, staffing and cost of fleet maintenance facilities. For a county, there are three separate components to the vehicle maintenance philosophy that need to be considered.

First, what are the replacement cycles for fleet equipment, i.e., is the age of the fleet old or new? If a county has a short replacement cycle, i.e. if new equipment is constantly brought into the fleet, the amount of maintenance required is clearly lower. Currently, although Erie has over the last few years purchased a significant amount of new equipment and reduced the age of its fleet, the county still has a backlog of older equipment that needs frequent repairs. The Director of Fleet Services is in the process of developing a replacement program based upon a quantitative point system that takes into account vehicle age, use, maintenance and cost factors. However, given the county's current fiscal troubles, the county is likely to continue to have a fairly high need for maintenance since equipment will not be able to be replaced at the optimal rate.

Second, does the county want to centralize fleet maintenance for routine, scheduled maintenance work? If a county follows a strict, planned maintenance routine, fleet equipment can be rotated into one or two central maintenance facilities, with much of the work being done off-hours. Regular maintenance and major repair work is most efficiently done in larger garages with the right staff and equipment. Only simple routine maintenance (fluid changes, belts, etc.) and emergency repair work should be done in garages located around the county. Currently, Erie does not manage its fleet to rotate equipment into one or two central fleet maintenance centers for routine maintenance during off-hours. Thus, the county has to have extra equipment to ensure that staff has needed equipment during working hours when some of the equipment is being repaired, and further, the county is not efficiently using its staff and facilities to carry out routine maintenance work.

Third, does the county want to concentrate its primary repair facilities, along with staff, in a few locations, or distribute staff and facilities around the county? Centralizing staff and facilities is more efficient for providing fleet maintenance services. However, the trade-off is that departmental staff utilization may be less efficient if they are unable to have use of, or easy access to equipment that they need during the hours of operation. Counties try to strike a balance between having just a few maintenance centers to keep fleet operations efficient and several satellite centers and/or portable road service operations to provide rapid response to DPW and Parks to minimize disruption to those operations. Currently, Erie operates under a decentralized fleet maintenance model for its DPW fleet (i.e. fleet maintenance is done in 10 garages), a semi-centralized model for Parks and general county fleet equipment (i.e. fleet maintenance is done primarily at 4 garages – Delaware Ave, Chestnut Ridge, Cuomo Park and ECMC) and a centralized model for Sheriff's vehicles (Alden). Thus, most work is currently performed at 15 different sites in the county.

Land Area and Street Network to Be Served

TABLE 1 shows that Erie has almost 400 more centerline miles that it is responsible for than Onondaga, the county with the next largest responsibility. However, both Jefferson and Chautauqua counties are larger in terms of square miles. Even allowing for the fact that Erie has to cover 400 more lane miles than the next

comparable county, as TABLE 1 shows, *Erie has a disproportionately large* number of maintenance facilities relative to the comparison counties.

Link with Other County Facilities

In Erie, there are no stand-alone fleet maintenance centers. Maintenance is done in garages that have multiple functions on the site, either in the same building or adjacent to it. All of the comparison counties also located maintenance facilities with other functions (primarily DPW operations). However, both Monroe and Onondaga have recently built large central fleet maintenance facilities that are essentially stand-alone buildings, and are designed to handle all major fleet maintenance and repairs.

Available Alternatives to County Facilities

In several of the comparison counties, the counties contract with the towns to provide snowplowing and/or maintenance of county roads. For example, the 22 towns in Jefferson County do 95% of the snow removal and 75%-80% of road maintenance and construction, and are reimbursed by the county. This helps explain why Jefferson can keep its fleet maintained with one garage even though it has a bigger land area than Erie. CGR obtained separate maps showing the roads that Erie DPW is responsible for plowing with its equipment, and for maintaining and repairing. These are different maps, and although there is a fair amount of overlap, there are a number of roads the county plows but does not otherwise maintain, and vice versa. The county maps also show that there are a number of town DPW facilities that are close to existing county DPW facilities. Where town and county facilities are close, this would suggest the possibility of co-locating operations and/or one or the other entity contracting with the other to eliminate duplication of services.

As noted previously, an additional factor to be considered in the future is whether or not the City of Buffalo and Erie County will merge. The City has a major DPW operations facility near downtown on Broadway. Long term, this facility needs to be replaced. If a city-county merger takes place, the City site would make a logical site for a major county fleet maintenance center.

Staffing Considerations

Availability and flexibility of the mechanics, laborers, inventory clerks and other fleet maintenance staff are considerations when planning fleet maintenance facilities. In Erie, the county's ability to move staff around to different locations is currently limited by

past practice and work rules, in particular due to the DPW district structure. Reducing the number of fleet maintenance sites and eliminating geographic areas of responsibility will give the county substantially more flexibility to deploy its staff more efficiently.

Number and Types of Equipment to be Serviced

Erie currently has approximately 1,000 pieces of equipment in its fleet, which includes a wide range of types, all the way from passenger cars to large pay loaders and 10 wheel dump trucks. The only equipment not included in the fleet numbers cited in this report is lawn mowing equipment. To handle this range of equipment, the county needs different sized bays and lift equipment. While in theory one maintenance center could accommodate the entire range of equipment, it is more practical to have different facilities that are specialized for different types of equipment. The county is currently organized more or less this way – the ECMC and Sheriff garages are designed to service light trucks and automobiles, whereas DPW garages have large bays and heavy lifts. Future county facilities need to take into account the diversity of the fleet.

Variable 2 - Location of Facilities

The primary factors for locating fleet maintenance facilities have to be easy access and central location, to minimize travel time between the fleet facility and the operations that utilize the fleet equipment. A secondary factor is the availability and cost of specific sites close to the desired location.

Certainly, Erie County is geographically so large that there should be a number of fleet maintenance facilities. Erie also is characterized by the fact that the weather conditions in the winter can vary significantly in different areas of the county. There are various snow bands depending on lake effect conditions. Another factor is that, especially in the southern, more rural part of the county, the road network is more limited, which increases travel time and reduces route options.

Based upon these factors, there should be several facilities located strategically around the county. The question is – where?

In a meeting held in April 2004 to discuss fleet maintenance facilities, DPW staff stated that their primary concern about where repair facilities were located was the time to get service. In theory, current DPW operations can be serviced rapidly from their current

ten sites. DPW staff noted two specific examples of concerns. First, during snowplowing season, if a truck breaks down during a plow run, they need to either get the truck back to a garage quickly, or have a mechanic be able to get to the truck quickly. Second, during road construction season, when crews are working, an entire crew might become unproductive if there is an equipment breakdown. Again, this requires either getting the vehicle back to the garage quickly or getting a mechanic to the field quickly.

Obviously, there is a trade-off between the number of garages and mechanics desired to give rapid service, and the cost of those facilities and mechanics. Historically, the county has determined that a reasonable compromise to provide service within acceptable cost boundaries has been to have ten DPW garages, each staffed by a mechanic and mechanic helpers. However, this project was undertaken to identify ways to further reduce costs. Thus, CGR had to model whether or not a reasonable level of service could still be provided with less than ten DPW garages.

DPW staff stated to CGR that, worst case, any truck should be able to get back to a garage within half an hour, or a mechanic arrive on the scene within half an hour, CGR assumed a conservative 20-mile-per-hour travel speed. Thus, at 20 miles per hour, a vehicle needs to be within a 10-mile radius of a service center in order to be reached within 30 minutes. To be even more realistic, travel should be based on the actual road network, not simply a theoretical radius.

Taking these factors into account, CGR (through its GIS consultant – Bergmann Associates) used GIS software to model optimal locations for DPW garage facilities that would provide the desired half-hour maximum coverage to 90% of county roads. CGR also made the distinction between county snowplow routes (which county vehicles plow) and county roads (which county crews work on during the summer). As noted previously, there is not a complete match between these two sets of roads. Thus, CGR prepared two different models, one for snowplow routes and one for county roads, to identify how much coverage would be provided from a facility in both summer and winter conditions.

The maps referred to below are included in Appendix A.

Maps 1A and 1B show six theoretical locations for fleet maintenance garages. If the county were to build garages at these six locations (shown by the stars), 94% of the county's snowplow routes would be within 10 miles (actual road miles) of at least one of the garages, and 88% of county roads (summertime) would be within 10 miles.

Since it is not clear whether or not the county will have the resources to create new sites for its garages, CGR then identified which *existing* DPW sites could come closest to meeting the theoretical best locations. The matching of theoretical sites to the closest actual sites was obvious for sites A, C and F. However, for Site A, once site F was moved to Hamburg, Site A needed to be moved to Harlem to provide maximum coverage. Similar logic applied in the southwest, for site E, where the theoretical best site was located between Angola and North Collins. After running the distance polygons for both of those sites, given that Hamburg was the closest match for site F, it was concluded that North Collins would provide a higher percentage of coverage, with less overlap, than Angola.

Maps 2A and 2B show the six existing sites that would provide the best coverage. The six sites (designated 1-6 on the maps) are:

- Clarence (1),
- E. Aurora (2),
- E. Concord (3),
- North Collins (4),
- Hamburg (5),
- Harlem (6).

These sites provide 86% coverage for snowplow routes, and 80% coverage for county roads. This coverage is less than for the optimal sites, however, this solution would be less costly since it would use existing county sites.

As mentioned above, one variable to consider is whether or not the city and county will merge. If that happens, it is likely that the city fleet maintenance center could become one of the key county fleet maintenance sites. Assuming that the new city site would be located relatively close to its current location (the city has already identified such a site), this would replace the Harlem Road

location. As shown on Maps 3A and 3B, if a new central city garage were used in place of theoretical site A, 91% of county snowplow routes would have the 10-mile coverage, and 85% of county roads would be covered. Because the city site and Harlem Road are so close, there would be very little difference in coverage using the city location as either one of the theoretical sites or one of the actual county sites.

In conclusion, CGR believes the following should be considered by the county:

- The county could locate garages to service DPW equipment at six regional sites rather than ten, and still provide response time coverage within a half hour, under extremely conservative assumptions (e.g. traveling at 20 miles/hour).

- The county could locate its garages at existing DPW facilities to provide this regional coverage, without seeing a significant drop-off in response time coverage from the theoretically best locations.

- Garages that service DPW operations clearly provide coverage for Parks facilities, therefore, as garage facilities are upgraded, existing Parks fleet maintenance facilities can be decommissioned and folded into the regional garages.

- If the city and county merge, the main city garage would be in a favorable location to serve as one of the six county garages.

- Until a definitive decision is made about the size and location of DPW garage facilities, the county should continue to operate its ECMC facility separately. Therefore, considering ECMC and the Sheriff's garage as specialized stand-alone units, the county should plan on shrinking the number of fleet maintenance facilities to these specialized garages plus six regional garages, for a total of eight.

Variable 3 – Size of the Facilities

The primary factors that need to be considered in determining the size of the fleet maintenance facilities were covered in the discussion about Variable 1. In particular, the size of the fleet, the diversity of equipment, the fleet replacement policy and the management philosophy (centralized versus decentralized) are key variables.

One other factor that is related to fleet maintenance facilities, is equipment storage requirements. Outdoor storage is not a significant factor in temperate weather, however, it becomes a major consideration for winter operations. Emergency equipment needs to start and work reliably. Traditionally, public works departments have tried to store key snowplowing and other equipment indoors, preferably in a heated area, at the same site from which crews are dispatched.

Extra storage capacity for equipment was not considered in this report as part of the basic fleet maintenance garage requirements. However, there is a clear advantage to locating the garage on larger DPW sites, as those sites contain barns and buildings for storing equipment. In fact, equipment can continue to be stored at any future DPW or Parks sites, as needed. The six regional garages are located close enough to any DPW or Parks site to provide service as required.

Consistent with the results of the February 2003 study and in the models followed in the comparison counties, CGR believes that Erie County should consider creating a major central garage, with the rest of the regional garages designed to be smaller satellite operations. Creating a large central garage will allow the county to create a two-shift maintenance and repair operation, and create a centralized inventory operation. Both of these improvements will create significant efficiencies and cost savings. CGR assumes the central garage will be staffed by twelve mechanics/helpers and three inventory supply specialists. It will be designed to have nine working bays, including three heavy duty lifts and three small lifts. ECMC and the Sheriff's garages would remain as-is. The large central garage would be located at one of the six DPW sites, thus the remaining five sites would be small regional garages, staffed by two mechanics, and have one heavy lift, one small lift and an extra work bay.

These recommendations do not factor in what might happen if the city and county merge. However, should that occur, the most likely scenario would be to designate two large centralized garages. The main county central garage could be expanded to handle some additional work and the city garage could become a second large central garage, to handle primarily city-designated equipment. Eventually, the ECMC garage could be folded into this second central garage, which would yield additional efficiencies.

Variable 4 – Cost of the Facilities

There are so many factors that could influence the cost of any of these facilities that CGR has chosen to address costs only in terms of ranges. For example, will a facility be built new, or will it be an upgrade to an existing facility. What sort of site improvements, if any, would be needed? Would there be any site acquisition costs? Given these uncertainties at the time this report was completed, CGR chose to ask its architectural consultant, Wendel Duchscherer, to develop generic cost estimates for three potential modular solutions.

Option 1 – Interior Renovations to an Existing Building: Renovations would be made to the interior of an existing shell (for example, an existing DPW barn already being used as a garage), to provide the facilities that CGR has identified for a small regional garage. Renovations would include one vehicle maintenance bay with a heavy lift, one vehicle maintenance bay with a floor lift, a small equipment repair bay, plus a parts storage room, office, fluids room and compressor room. Maintenance personnel would share the lunch area, locker rooms and toilet rooms already available within the building. Cost estimate - $732,000 per site.

Option 2 – Addition to Existing Building: This approach would include the same facilities described for Option 1 except that all spaces would be located in an addition to the existing building. This approach assumes the addition would be able to utilize the existing facility's electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems at nominal additional cost. Cost estimate - $1,082,000 per site.

Option 3 – New Building: This approach would include the same facilities described for Option 1 except that all spaces would be located in a new building located on a county-owned site. The building would also include its own multi-purpose lunch/waiting

room, locker areas and toilet rooms. Utility connections for water, storm, sanitary, gas, electric, and communications are required. Cost estimate - $1,142,000 per site.

The concept-level construction estimates for each option do not include site work or site amenities such as parking lots, etc., under the assumption that any garage upgrade would occur on an existing county site. If the maintenance facility is constructed on a new site, the estimates would need to be revised to include site acquisition costs, site improvements and utility services.

These generalized estimates are for a basic three-bay maintenance facility. A reasonable assumption for general budget purposes is that these costs are scalable. Thus, since the recommended central maintenance facility would be three times the size of a small regional facility, the construction cost would be three times as great.

More detail of Wendel Duchscherer's cost estimates for each option are provided in Appendix B.

These estimates are based on the assumption that the county would completely renovate existing facilities or build new as part of a major capital improvement program. However, it may be possible to renovate and improve the six designated sites for substantially less money, as a short term (two to five year) solution until more capital funds can be obtained as part of the major DPW operations capital program. Buying two additional 100,000 pound lifts to upgrade Aurora and one additional site, purchasing a few additional 20,000 pound lifts and additional floor equipment, and making minor upgrades to parts rooms to improve inventory control and other improvements to support a second shift at Aurora, could be accomplished for $750,000. That would be a starting investment to allow consolidation of fleet maintenance sites as suggested.

SECTION 3 – MOVING FORWARD

In order to achieve the direct cost savings identified in the February 2003 report, in addition to service efficiencies inherent in creating a centrally managed fleet maintenance operation, the county needs to take several action steps. These can be undertaken sequentially, or in parallel, but without taking these actions, the county will not be able to move forward to meet the cost and service objectives indicated.

Facilities

This report concludes that six existing county DPW sites could provide the location for six regional garages. Five of the locations would house smaller regional garages. One location would be a regional garage and the large central fleet maintenance facility. These six garages would be in addition to the ECMC and Sheriff's garages, for the intermediate term, until either or both of those operations were folded into a central fleet maintenance facility.

Due to its relatively central location, large site and modern facilities, the East Aurora facility is the best candidate for designation as and upgrade to the county's main central garage. Once that designation is made, the county then needs to determine the long-term status of DPW operations at the other five locations.

Erie DPW has been in the process of developing a long-term facilities plan. The fleet maintenance facilities should be considered in DPW facilities planning, since it would make sense to have county regional garages be located with county DPW facilities. The decision about whether to invest in garage facilities at any of the current county DPW facilities will depend on the county's long term plan for each facility.

For example, if DPW is not planning to remain in and invest in the North Collins site, then the county would not want to make any significant investment in garage facilities on that site. Short term (for the next two to five years) upgrades might be justified to create the regional garage in that location. But, if North Collins is ultimately going to be closed, the new garage should be located at the new DPW location that is going to replace North Collins.

While it makes the most sense to tie the regional garages into county DPW operations, fleet maintenance garages do not necessarily need to be tied into DPW facilities. For example, the county could contract with a town or village that had room to allow the county to build one of the county regional garages at the town or village DPW site. Or, alternatively, the county could contract directly with a town or village with a site close to the optimal site locations indicated in the maps in this report to provide regional fleet maintenance.

The other major variable that may affect identification of facilities is the potential impact of a merger between the city and the county. As noted above, a merger would potentially create *two* main central garages – one located in the city, primarily to service city-related equipment, and the other located at the East Aurora site (primarily to service county DPW and parks equipment). If the city garage became the second garage, then the county would still need to maintain four other regional garages, as noted in the maps, if it wished to maintain the speed of response zones that were the models for the maps. Again, as noted previously, longer term, it would make sense to integrate the ECMC garage into the new city garage upon a merger of the city and county.

If the city and county merge, one other area that has not yet been discussed would have to be incorporated into garage facilities planning – public services. Currently, both the city police and the sheriff operate independent garages, and the city fire department operates a specialized garage for its equipment. A merged city/county operation should look at the opportunity to at least centralize police garage operations, probably at the city police garage site, since that is so much larger than the county's. County sheriff vehicles would receive regular maintenance at that central site, although field repairs could be done at one of the smaller regional garages if necessary. If the city and county do merge, a small study should be undertaken to determine the most efficient way to provide police and fire vehicle maintenance for the combined city/county fleets.

Staffing

At the time of the February 2003 report, a preliminary organization chart was developed for a proposed Central Fleet Operations department that would consolidate fleet maintenance

staff from various departments into one department. This chart was updated in the fall of 2003 for discussion purposes for the 2004 county budget. However, the consolidation of staff has not yet occurred. Given the organizational issues associated with creating a single fleet operations department, and uncertainties about the impact of a city/county merger, the best that can be done at this time is to outline what staffing might look if a Central Fleet Operations department were created.

TABLE 2 shows a proposed staffing model for the department, which adds up to thirty-four positions. This is based upon the assumption that the department would run the ECMC garage, one large central fleet garage (which would includes a two-shift operation and a central fleet inventory stockroom), and five regional garages. If the sheriff's garage is added to the mix, this would add one additional staff person, for a total of thirty-five.

Titles shown in the table are generic titles. In many cases (auto mechanics, for example), the titles do reflect titles of staff currently working in various departments in fleet operations. However, the titles are meant to reflect the type of work that would be carried out. An actual detailed crosswalk would have to be developed between existing and proposed staffing to transition current staff into the new department.

The staffing model does not include two items: staffing for city parks fleet maintenance, and staffing for a combined city-county operation. Currently, city parks fleet maintenance that is currently being performed under contract to the city uses the city's Delaware Avenue garage, and employs four people. Long term, it is assumed that operation would be folded into a combined city/county operation.

TABLE 2
Proposed Staffing Model for a Central Fleet Operations Department – Based on Current County Operations

Central Management Staff	Number
Director of Fleet Operations	1
Fiscal Analyst	1
Administrative Clerk	1
Total	***3***
Garage Staff	
At Central Garage - two-shift coverage	
Fleet Maintenance Manager	1
Supervising Auto Mech	2
Auto Mechs	6
Laborers	4
Inventory supply specialists	3
Location total	***16***
At ECMC	
Operations Manager	1
Supervising Auto Mech	1
Auto Mech	1
Laborers	2
Location total	***5***
At each regional garage - total of 5 garages	
Auto Mech	1
Blacksmith	1
Total per location	*2*
Total for 5 locations	***10***
Department total	***34***
Total if Sheriff is included	***35***

Cost-Benefit

An assessment of the costs and benefits of moving forward to consolidate fleet operations will be based on comparing personnel and building operating cost savings against capital investments made by the county.

The February 2003 report predicted a personnel cost savings of from $140,000 to $150,000 annually due to staffing reductions as a result of centralizing fleet maintenance operations. The staffing

model shown in TABLE 2 , with 34 positions, would represent a seven person reduction over positions carried in the 2004 county budget that were identified as having either full- or part-time involvement in comparable fleet operations. Further staffing reductions are highly likely once the operations become centralized and the new central garage becomes fully operational. For example, the supervisor of Onondaga County's operations stated to CGR that before they modernized their central operations at their new facility, he had 20 mechanics. After the new facility became fully operational, his fleet maintenance staff has been reduced by eight positions through attrition, without degrading service. The initial report assumed an additional $100,000 to $150,000 savings from further attrition in Erie County due to future efficiencies.

Erie could accomplish its departmental consolidation without initially investing in new garage facilities, with the exception of upgrading the East Aurora site to become a central garage. However, a review of existing facilities by Wendell Duchscherer indicates that many of the current facilities do need to be upgraded if they are going to serve as regional garages in the long term. As noted above, capital investments could be coordinated with other DPW facility planning, to obtain the most efficient use of county capital investment dollars.

The February 2003 report also projected savings of from $50,000 to $100,000 per year in reduced heat, light, power and maintenance costs by reducing the number of fleet maintenance facilities.

Thus, total operating savings of from $190,000 to $400,000 annually are projected by consolidating fleet maintenance. These savings could be used to offset capital costs. Thus, if the county were to invest the $750,000 minimum suggested previously, this could be paid back, in the best case, in less than two years from operating savings. Substantial facilities upgrades for the longer term like those outlined in the options listed above would have much longer payback periods.

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSION

Erie County could meet its fleet maintenance service needs by operating as few as eight fleet maintenance garages (not including the City Parks garage): six at current DPW sites which already have garages, the ECMC maintenance center, and the Sheriff's garage. The fleet maintenance staff could be reduced to 35 total positions (34 staff for county operations and 1 for the Sheriff), but this staff should be managed centrally to coordinate the efficient assignment of staff with the appropriate skills to the various garages as needed.

One central site (the Aurora DPW site) should be designated as the central maintenance facility, and staffed with two shifts, so that maintenance can be performed during off-hours. This would improve utilization of vehicles and should permit the county to reduce the number of vehicles in the fleet. The county should invest in new fleet maintenance facilities over time, especially in conjunction with upgrades to its DPW facilities. However, in the short term, investing $750,000 in lifts and other minor facilities improvements should permit the county to consolidate its fleet operations and achieve the operating efficiencies identified in this report.

APPENDIX A – MAPS OF POTENTIAL SITES

APPENDIX B – FACILITY UPGRADE OPTIONS