



# TACIR

The Tennessee Advisory Commission  
on Intergovernmental Relations



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## ***MEMORANDUM***

**TO:** Commission Members

**FROM:** Cliff Lippard  
Executive Director *Cliff*

**DATE:** 31 January 2025

**SUBJECT:** Rolling Stock—Draft Report for Review and Comment

The attached draft commission report is submitted for your review and comment. It was prepared in response to a request from Mayor Rial at the January 2024 meeting that the commission study the challenges faced by state and local governments in acquiring vehicles, including fire trucks, salt trucks, and school buses. He asked the commission to assess the availability, timelines for delivery, and the potential effects on public service delivery.

Interviews with approximately 30 government officials in Tennessee, representing fire, emergency medical services (EMS), highways, public works, school districts, and purchasing departments, confirm that costs have surged, and vehicle procurement delays are extensive, potentially affecting the ability to maintain essential public services. State and local governments rely on both light-duty and heavy-duty vehicles to operate and deliver many different public services, and the extent and likelihood of procurement challenges vary in part based on vehicle type. However, regardless of the vehicle type, the challenges related to acquiring them are not specific to Tennessee—they are national and international issues. In general, the delays in vehicle delivery and rising costs stem from global supply chain disruptions that either have their roots in or were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic when production was shut down, triggering severe bottlenecks in manufacturing. According to national industry organizations such as the American Public Works Association and the National Association of State Procurement Officials, no state has been immune to these obstacles or seems to have solved the problem.

The supply chain disruptions and rising costs that state and local governments face when procuring rolling stock are largely beyond their control. Short of producing their own vehicles—a private EMS company based in Chattanooga has started buying transit vans and refitting them with necessary features to function as ambulances because it is faster and cheaper than ordering and waiting for chassis—governments will generally have to make do and adapt using the resources and strategies already available to them. Fortunately, the commission finds there are several strategies that can be implemented without action by the General Assembly that government agencies can use to mitigate the challenges. They include

- establish vehicle maintenance and replacement plans,
- leverage fleet management software and global positioning systems (GPS),
- consider vehicle repair over replacement,
- prepare a contingency plan for vehicle leasing or renting,
- leverage financial incentives for vehicles,
- use the flexibility built into state purchasing laws,
- maintain flexibility with vehicle and specification selection,
- use alternative vehicles, and
- consolidate vehicle fleets.