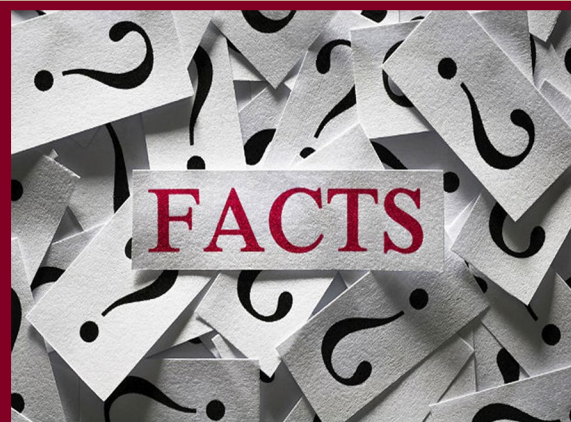




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Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller  
Pinellas County, Florida



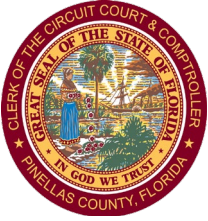
# INVESTIGATION OF MISUSE OF COUNTY TIME AND EQUIPMENT



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Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive

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REPORT NO. 2020-22  
OCTOBER 30, 2020



## Ken Burke, CPA

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October 30, 2020

Kelli Levy, Public Works Director

The Division of Inspector General's Public Integrity Unit has completed an investigation of the following allegations related to Deontay Voss, Public Works Crew Chief II:

- Mr. Voss is misusing County time and his County vehicle by taking it home during the day. **Substantiated**
- Mr. Voss is misusing County time and his County vehicle by parking in various non-work related parking lots throughout the day. **Substantiated**

To determine whether the allegations were substantiated, we reviewed policies, procedures, and appropriate records. We also interviewed staff and other parties, as needed. Our investigation was performed according to the *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* and *The Florida Inspectors General Standards Manual* from The Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

The Division of Inspector General uses the following terminology for the conclusion of fact/finding(s):

- **Substantiated** – An allegation is substantiated when there is sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the allegation is true.
- **Unsubstantiated** – An allegation is unsubstantiated when there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation.
- **Unfounded** – An allegation is unfounded when it is proved to be false or there is no credible evidence to support it.



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Inspector General

Kelli Levy, Public Works Director  
October 30, 2020

The recommendations presented in this report may not be all-inclusive of areas where improvement may be needed; however, we believe implementation of the recommendations will strengthen the current internal controls.

We appreciate the cooperation shown by the staff of the Public Works Department during the course of this investigation.

Respectfully Submitted,



Melissa Dondero  
Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive

cc: The Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board of County Commissioners  
Barry Burton, County Administrator  
Jill Silverboard, Assistant County Administrator  
Kenneth Jacobs, Section Manager, Public Works Transportation Division  
Ken Burke, CPA, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Background</i>	5
<i>Allegations</i>	5
<i>Investigative Activity</i>	6
<b>INVESTIGATIVE CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS</b>	<b>13</b>
1. <i>Mr. Voss Misused County Time And Equipment.</i>	13

# INTRODUCTION

## ***Background***

The Public Works Department (Public Works) manages essential vehicular, pedestrian, and drainage infrastructure as well as critical natural and urban environmental resources for Pinellas County (County). The department works with citizens to provide services such as mowing, urban forestry, mosquito control, traffic control, sidewalk, road, drainage, and bridge maintenance as well as develop and manage capital projects for the County while ensuring protection of natural and built resources. Public Works is one of the largest departments in the County, consisting of six divisions, including:

- Construction Division
- Customer & Technical Services Division
- Environmental Management Division
- Stormwater & Vegetation Division
- Survey & Mapping Division
- Transportation Division

In 2015, the County entered into a contract with Synovia Solutions, LLC (Synovia) to obtain Global Positioning System (GPS) devices for various departments including Public Works. Hardware installed in vehicles gathers location and vehicle diagnostic information and then transmits it to cloud-based software. The software provides an interface for departments to receive and disseminate vehicle tracking, engine diagnostics, and driver behavior monitoring data. Public Works currently uses over 300 GPS devices through Synovia.

## ***Allegations***

The Division of Inspector General initiated an investigation after receiving a complaint through the fraud, waste, and abuse hotline. The complaint alleged Deontay Voss, Crew Chief II:

1. Misuses County time and his County vehicle by taking it home during the day.
2. Misuses County time and his County vehicle by going to various shopping centers each day.

## ***Investigative Activity***

During the course of the investigation, we performed the following to obtain evidence to conclude on the allegations:

- Reviewed County and Public Works policies
- Conducted surveillance
- Conducted interviews of Public Works management and staff
- Reviewed and analyzed GPS records
- Obtained other applicable records

# INVESTIGATIVE CONCLUSIONS

The Division of Inspector General uses the following terminology for the conclusion of fact/finding(s):

- **Substantiated** – An allegation is substantiated when there is sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the allegation is true.
- **Unsubstantiated** – An allegation is unsubstantiated when there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation.
- **Unfounded** – An allegation is unfounded when it is proved to be false or there is no credible evidence to support it.

During the course of the investigation, we determined the following facts to conclude on the allegations:

1. The complaint alleged Mr. Voss misused County time and his County vehicle by taking home his County vehicle during the day. We performed the following:
  - Reviewed applicable County policies and procedures
  - Conducted surveillance
  - Reviewed and analyzed GPS records
  - Interviewed Public Works management and staff

As stated in County Administrative Directive 2-13, take-home vehicles are prohibited without an approved and documented exception. We conducted surveillance over a period of three full days and one partial day and observed Mr. Voss driving his County vehicle home during work hours.

Like many Public Works vehicles, Mr. Voss's County vehicle is equipped with a Synovia GPS tracking device. We downloaded and reviewed the GPS activity for his vehicle for the timeframe of March 1, 2020, through August 12, 2020.

By using certain data fields within the GPS data, we were able to confirm Mr. Voss took his primary County vehicle (#122295) home 40 times. On average, Mr. Voss spent 47 minutes at home with the longest stay at home lasting 3 hours and 7 minutes. Over the 40 events Mr. Voss took his primary County vehicle home, he spent a total of 31 hours and 29 minutes at home. These times are based solely on the time between the vehicle being turned off and being turned back on at his residence. In addition to the 31 hours



Figure 1 - Parked in front of his home

and 29 minutes noted above, Mr. Voss also idled his vehicle at his residence for a total of 1 hour and 11 minutes.

During surveillance, we noted Mr. Voss switched vehicles with another employee and took the secondary County vehicle home. Due to this activity, we also reviewed the GPS data associated with the secondary vehicle (#121807). The additional review confirmed he took that vehicle home 9 additional times for a total of 2 hours and 21 minutes. As calculated below, between March 1, 2020, and August 12, 2020, Mr. Voss took two County vehicles home 49 times and spent a total of 35 hours at home during County work time.

<b>Home Review</b>		
<b>Vehicle/Event</b>	<b>Time (hh:mm:ss)</b>	<b>Total Time (hh:mm:ss)</b>
Vehicle #122295 (Primary) Ignition On/Off Time	31:29:07	
Vehicle #122295 (Primary) Idle Time	<u>01:10:53</u>	
<b>#122295 Total</b>		<b>32:40:00</b>
Vehicle #121807 (Secondary) Ignition On/Off Time	00:41:22	
Vehicle #121807 (Secondary) Idle Time	<u>01:39:27</u>	
<b>#121807 Total</b>		<b>02:20:49</b>
<b>Total All Vehicles</b>		<b>35:00:49</b>

Our analysis did not include any related travel time driving to or from his residence, as we had insufficient information to calculate the associated travel times accurately. However, any time Mr. Voss spent driving to and from his home would also be considered a misuse of County time and equipment. Our investigation of the allegation determined it was **substantiated**.

2. The complaint alleged Mr. Voss misused County time and his County vehicle by parking at various non-work related shopping centers each day. We performed the following:

- Reviewed applicable County policies and procedures
- Conducted surveillance
- Reviewed and analyzed GPS records
- Interviewed Public Works management and staff
- Reviewed time card records
- Reviewed Public Works video surveillance

Mr. Voss was permitted a 30-minute lunch and two paid 15-minute breaks each day. During our surveillance, we observed Mr. Voss take several onsite and offsite breaks and lunches in excess of his permitted breaks as well as park in various



*Figure 2 - Parked at a gas station taking a break*



shopping centers during those breaks. Mr. Voss went to several gas stations, Publix locations, and even County facilities despite not performing work-related activities.



*Figure 3 - Mr. Voss walking into Publix on a break*

During the respondent interview, Mr. Voss stated, while on his breaks or lunches he would either sit in his County vehicle, drive to a nearby gas station or Publix shopping center, drive home, or drive to the Public Works North Yard (North Yard) located at 4314 Palm Harbor Blvd., Palm Harbor, FL 34683. He acknowledged management instructed him several times to include travel time as part of any breaks or lunches but stated he almost never accounted for travel times.

Over the three full days we conducted surveillance, Mr. Voss was allotted three hours for breaks and lunches. Excluding travel time, we observed Mr. Voss take both onsite and offsite breaks and lunches totaling 7 hours and 35 minutes. His offsite breaks and lunches those days included:

- Excessive time spent at the North Yard
- 3 trips to his home
- 9 trips to various gas stations
- 5 trips to Publix shopping centers

When questioned about the amount of time spent at the North Yard, Mr. Voss stated he went there frequently toward the end of his shifts to “hang out” because it appeared less suspicious for him to be at a County facility instead of sitting at a jobsite not working.

As previously noted, along with surveillance, we downloaded and reviewed the GPS activity for Mr. Voss’s vehicle for the timeframe of March 1, 2020, through August 12, 2020. In addition to his visits home, we analyzed the data to identify frequently visited nonwork locations (hot spots), visits to the North Yard, and idle times. Following is a summary for each location.

### ***Hot Spots Review***

Our analysis of GPS data identified 13 hot spots Mr. Voss visited frequently not related to work. Those locations included various gas stations, Publix shopping centers, and a County park. During the review, we noted 1 of the 13 locations was a residential address that was not associated with Mr. Voss. We compared the address to County personnel records and confirmed it matched another Public Works employee’s home address. That employee was assigned to Mr. Voss’s work



*Figure 4 - Idling in a Hot Spot parking lot taking a break*

crew. We shared this information with management which took appropriate actions and disciplined the employee in accordance with personnel rules.

For the 13 identified hot spots, we confirmed that, during the reviewed timeframe, Mr. Voss visited these locations a total of 170 times and spent a total of 27 hours and 31 minutes. The longest time spent at one of these locations was a Publix shopping center where he spent 1 hour and 12 minutes. In addition to parking at the various hot spots, review of the idle reports confirmed he spent nearly 4 additional hours idling at these locations.

<b>Hot Spots Review</b>	
	<b>Time (hh:mm:ss)</b>
Total Engine Off Time At Hot Spot Locations	27:30:51
Total Idle Time at Hot Spot Locations	<u>03:59:25</u>
<b>Total Time At Hot Spot Locations</b>	<b>31:30:16</b>

**North Yard Review**

During surveillance, we observed Mr. Voss spend excessive time taking breaks at the North Yard. After confirmation from Public Works management, we concluded Mr. Voss had a business reason to visit the North Yard such as obtaining materials for the day or disposing of trash. However, he would only need to visit the location once daily for a maximum of 30 minutes. Based on discussions with Public Works management, any time beyond 30 minutes daily would be considered excessive.



*Figure 5 - Parked under a tree at North Yard taking a break*

A review of time cards and video surveillance confirmed between March 1, 2020, and August 12, 2020, Mr. Voss worked 85 days. Of the 85 days he worked, he visited the North Yard 62 of those days for a total of 73 hours and 42 minutes. During two visits in a single day, Mr. Voss spent 4 hours and 32 minutes at the North Yard. The North Yard is established as a zone in Synovia which provides total time spent versus separate engine and idle events. Based on the expectations set by Public Works management, Mr. Voss spent an excess of 42 hours and 42 minutes at the North Yard as calculated below:

<b>North Yard Review</b> (Time in hh:mm:ss)	
Total Time Spent in the North Yard	73:42:12
# Of Days Visited North Yard	62
Acceptable Amount of Time for 62 visits (62 days X 30 minutes)	31:00:00
<b>Total Excess Time Spent At North Yard</b>	<b>42:42:12</b>

***Idling Review***

During surveillance, we observed Mr. Voss idle in his vehicle for several minutes at multiple locations before turning off the vehicle and exiting. As a result of these actions, we also analyzed the idle times associated with Mr. Voss’s vehicle during the same time frame of March 1, 2020, through August 12, 2020. Based on the GPS data, we identified excessive idling at 4 of the previously mentioned hot spots. Analysis of the idle data confirmed Mr. Voss had excessive idling of 3 hours and 59 minutes associated with those 4 locations.

In addition to reviewing the idle times for the identified hot spots, we also reviewed the idling data as a whole and noted between March 1, 2020, and August 12, 2020, Mr. Voss’s vehicle had a total idle time of 333 hours and 9 minutes. Based on discussions with management, given normal daily activities and visiting multiple job sites, they considered an acceptable amount of daily idle time for a vehicle was 30 minutes.

As shown below, we calculated the allowable idle time for the reviewed time frame by taking the 85 days Mr. Voss worked and multiplying by 30 minutes to get 42 hours and 30 minutes. We then subtracted any idle times previously included in the home, hot spots, and North Yard calculations to avoid double counting. We also removed any idle times associated with days the vehicle was driven when Mr. Voss did not work. This resulted in 191 hours and 55 minutes of excessive idle time for the period of March 1, 2020, through August 12, 2020.

<b>Idle Time Review</b>		
<b>Idle Time Summary</b>	<b>Time (hh:mm:ss)</b>	<b>Total Time (hh:mm:ss)</b>
All Idle Time	333:09:10	
Acceptable Idle Time	<del>(42:30:00)</del>	
<b>Subtotal Excess Idle Time</b>		<b>290:39:10</b>
Idle Time At Home <i>(see allegation #1 conclusion)</i>	<del>(2:50:20)</del>	
Idle Time At Hot Spots <i>(see <b>Hot Spots Review</b> heading)</i>	<del>(3:59:25)</del>	
Idle Time At North Yard <i>(included in North Yard zone calculation in <b>North Yard Review</b> heading)</i>	<del>(61:08:20)</del>	
Idle Time From Days Not Worked	<del>(30:46:32)</del>	
<b>Subtotal Idle Time Already Counted</b>		<b>98:44:37</b>
<b>Total Excess Idle Time Not Previously Counted</b>		<b>191:54:33</b>

***Allegation #2 Summary***

Our review and analysis confirmed Mr. Voss repeatedly took excess breaks and lunches while parking and idling at various locations while on County time. Our investigation of the allegation determined it was **substantiated**.

### ***Misuse of County Time Summary***

To summarize the identified nonworking hours, we totaled the previously identified events including the visits home, visits to the identified hot spots, the excess time spent at the North Yard, as well as the excess idle time not previously counted in the other location calculations. As shown below, those events totaled 301 hours and 8 minutes. Over the course of the 85 days Mr. Voss worked during the reviewed time period, his permitted breaks and lunches totaled 85 hours.

After subtracting the allotted time for breaks and lunches, we calculated Mr. Voss had at least 216 hours and 8 minutes associated with nonwork activity. Again, our analysis did not include any related travel time driving to or from any of the identified locations, as we had insufficient information to calculate the associated travel times accurately. However, any travel time would also be considered a misuse of County time and equipment.

<b>Total Nonwork Time</b>	
	<b>Time (hh:mm:ss)</b>
Total Time At Home	35:00:49
Total Time At Hot Spots	31:30:16
Total Excess Time At North Yard	42:42:12
Total Excess Idle Time	<u>191:54:33</u>
<b>Total Nonwork Time</b>	<b>301:07:50</b>
Allowable Breaks and Lunches	<u>(85:00:00)</u>
<b>Total Misuse of County Time</b>	<b>216:07:50</b>

# INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

## ***1. Mr. Voss Misused County Time and Equipment.***

We reviewed GPS records, conducted surveillance, and confirmed Deontay Voss misused County time and equipment by taking his County vehicle home during the day without authorization and taking breaks and lunches in excess of his allotted times. Between March 1, 2020, and August 12, 2020, Mr. Voss took his County vehicle home on 49 occasions without authorization.

County employees have not been permitted to take County vehicles home for more than a decade. Outlined in Administrative Directive 2-13, Take-Home Vehicles and Equipment, is the following mandate:

*"A. No county vehicle or equipment shall be used as a 'take-home' vehicle, except as otherwise provided herein.*

*B. 'Take-home' vehicle refers to county-owned vehicles and equipment that are parked in a non-county-owned/managed location when not actively being used to perform county business (e.g. – parked at employee's home overnight). Equipment refers to fleet assets."*

In addition to taking his County vehicle home, surveillance and GPS records confirmed Mr. Voss consistently took excessive breaks and lunches while visiting gas stations, stores, and Publix shopping centers. Mr. Voss was permitted to take two 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute lunch each day. Management stated it instructed Mr. Voss several times to include any travel time as part of a break or lunch.

Mr. Voss failed to adhere to his allotted break and lunch times. Despite being instructed numerous times to include travel time in his breaks or lunches, he opted not to follow management's orders.

Our GPS review also revealed numerous visits by Mr. Voss to the Public Works North Yard. As part of his job, Mr. Voss had legitimate work-related reasons to visit the Public Works North Yard daily. However, as confirmed with management, Mr. Voss would only need to visit the North Yard once a day for a maximum of 30 minutes. GPS records confirmed Mr. Voss visited the North Yard location 62 separate days resulting in excess time of 42 hours and 42 minutes spent there. We confirmed during an interview and surveillance Mr. Voss and his crew went to the North Yard for lunches, or if they finished work early, they went to "hang out" until the end of their shift so as not to be visible to citizens.

Finally, a review of the idle times associated with Mr. Voss's vehicle on the days he worked showed excessive idling of 191 hours and 55 minutes. As outlined in section 1 of the Vehicle and Equipment Idling Directive:

*"In accordance and alignment with the County's goals of improved air quality, reduced fuel consumption, and reduction in overall cost, all County owned and operated vehicles and equipment, unless otherwise identified and exempted, shall **not** be idled in normal working conditions or non-emergency related conditions."*

While we commend management for contacting the Inspector General after preliminary reviews of Mr. Voss's GPS data revealed possible misuse of resources, a lack of continuous or thorough monitoring of the activities of Mr. Voss's vehicle allowed his behavior to continue undetected for several months. These activities resulted in at least 216 hours of wasted County time and equipment.

When an employee misuses County time and equipment, it not only puts unnecessary wear and tear on the vehicle, but it wastes taxpayer money used to pay for both the fuel for the vehicle and the salary of an employee not providing adequate service to the County. In addition to the wasteful use of resources, such actions diminish the public's trust.

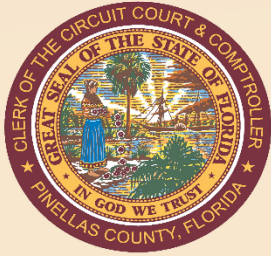
**Mr. Voss resigned from Pinellas County, effective August 24, 2020. Therefore, no management recommendation is necessary with respect to disciplinary action.**

***We Recommend Management:***

- A. Remind employees of County policies related to the use of County equipment including the Take-Home Vehicles and Equipment policy and Vehicle and Equipment Idling Directive.
- B. As originally recommended in Investigation Report #2019-35, we continue to recommend management create applicable policies and procedures related to the use and monitoring of GPS devices for Public Works vehicles and disseminate to appropriate staff.
- C. Remind employees to adhere to scheduled break and lunch times as well as include any related travel time as part of their breaks or lunches.

***Management Response:***

- A. **Management Concurs.** While this information has been provided to all employees on several occasions, the information will be provided again.
- B. **Management Concurs.** A policy will be developed and included in the Department's policies and procedures manual. This supplemental policy will be aligned with Administrative Directive 2-13 and applicable Human Resources rules.
- C. **Management Concurs.**



# DIVISION OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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