

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-426](#), a report to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Federal agencies spent about \$3.4 billion in fiscal year 2015 to keep and operate almost 450,000 federally owned vehicles. Each federal agency is responsible for determining utilization criteria and assessing vehicle utilization. GAO was asked to describe federally owned vehicles and examine federal processes for assessing their utilization.

This report, among other objectives: (1) describes recently purchased vehicles, and (2) assesses selected agencies' efforts to determine if vehicles are utilized.

GAO analyzed government-wide data on approximately 64,500 light trucks and passenger vehicles purchased through GSA from fiscal years 2011 through 2015, the most recent available. To assess utilization efforts, GAO selected three agencies (using factors such as fleet size), and reviewed agency utilization information on over 12,000 owned vehicles from fiscal year 2015. GAO also interviewed federal officials. These findings are not generalizable to all agencies but provide insight into the practices of agencies that procure thousands of vehicles.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that CBP develop a plan for how it will use its new data collection devices to establish criteria and assess vehicle utilization and that USDA communicate its vehicle utilization policy to fleet officials. DHS and USDA plan to implement these recommendations.

View [GAO-17-426](#). For more information, contact Lori Rectanus at (202) 512-2834 or rectanusl@gao.gov.

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FEDERALLY OWNED VEHICLES

Agencies Should Improve Processes to Identify Underutilized Vehicles

What GAO Found

Federal agencies spent more than \$1.6 billion to purchase approximately 64,500 passenger vehicles and light trucks through the General Services Administration (GSA) from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. Five departments—Defense (DOD), Homeland Security (DHS), Agriculture (USDA), Justice, and Interior—purchased 90 percent of these vehicles, and spent a comparable percentage of the associated funds. The vehicles cost an average of approximately \$25,600 each.

GAO determined that the three agencies reviewed—Navy within DOD, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) within DHS, and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) within USDA—varied in efforts to determine if vehicles were utilized in fiscal year 2015. Navy determined that all of the 3,652 vehicles GAO selected for review were utilized by applying DOD and Navy criteria such as for mileage and individually justifying vehicles. CBP did not determine if 1,862 (81 percent) of its 2,300 selected vehicles were utilized in fiscal year 2015 even though the vehicles did not meet DHS's minimum mileage criteria. CBP officials stated that, contrary to DHS policy, CBP did not have criteria to measure these vehicles' utilization because it was difficult to manually collect the data needed to establish appropriate criteria and assess if vehicles met those criteria. CBP is currently installing devices in many of its vehicles that will allow it to more easily collect such data, but lacks a specific plan for how to ensure these data will allow it to determine if vehicles are utilized. NRCS did not determine if 579 (9 percent) of its 6,223 selected vehicles were utilized in fiscal year 2015. USDA and NRCS fleet officials stated that the agency did not annually assess vehicle utilization, nor did it apply USDA criteria such as mileage or days used. USDA and NRCS officials said they were unaware of USDA's policy requiring these steps because the policy had not been widely discussed or shared within USDA since 2012. CBP and NRCS cumulatively incurred an estimated \$13.5 million in depreciation and maintenance costs in fiscal year 2015 for vehicles with unknown utilization (see table). While these costs may not equal the cost savings agencies derive from eliminating underutilized vehicles, without corrective action, agencies are incurring expenses to retain vehicles without determining if they are utilized.

Number, Percentage, and Cost of Selected Owned Vehicles That Selected Agencies Did Not Identify as either Utilized or Underutilized in Fiscal Year 2015

Agency	Number of owned vehicles selected by GAO	Number of selected vehicles with unknown utilization ^a	Percentage of the agency's selected owned vehicles	Estimated cost to retain vehicles, in millions ^b
Customs and Border Protection	2,300	1,862	81	\$12.7
Natural Resources Conservation Service	6,223	579	9	\$0.8
Navy	3,652	0	0	\$0.0
Total	12,175	2,441	20	\$13.5

Source: GAO analysis of agency-provided data. | GAO-17-426

^a Selected owned vehicles for each agency in GAO's review covered all passenger vehicles and light trucks, except those that were: 1) emergency responder vehicles, 2) law enforcement vehicles, 3) tactical vehicles, or 4) located outside the Continental United States, among other limited exclusions.

^b Costs (in nominal dollars) include maintenance and depreciation in fiscal year 2015. Depreciation costs are unrealized until the vehicle is sold.