



## Microsoft Customer Solution Customer Solution Case Study

### Windows-based Solution Steers Transportation Company Toward Greater Efficiency

#### Overview

**Country:** Canada

**Industry:** Transportation

#### Customer Profile

Calgary-based Pacific Western Transportation is one of the largest privately owned transportation companies in Canada and carries more passengers annually than the population of Canada. Its fleet is licensed to take passengers anywhere in North America.

#### Business Situation

By law, PWT is mandated to schedule and track maintenance for its fleet of 2,000 buses and motor coaches. The company was looking for a more efficient way to manage maintenance.

#### Solution

PWT worked with Microsoft® Certified Partner Cetaris to deploy Fleet Assistant for Windows®, a centralized client/server application that tracks, analyzes, and presents critical maintenance information.

#### Benefits

- Effective maintenance scheduling
- Tracks warranty reimbursement
- Reduces chronic repair
- Uses negotiated parts pricing
- Tracks costs and exceptions

“Our goal was to keep more accurate records of component failures so that when we bought new vehicles, we knew how to improve the specifications in order to obtain lower life cycle cost.”

Thomas Schmidt, Corporate IT Manager, Pacific Western Transportation

Safe travel is of the utmost importance to transportation industry suppliers such as Pacific Western Transportation (PWT). The Calgary-based motor coach, school bus, and transit carrier prides itself on providing the most mechanically sound motor coaches and buses on the road. However, managing the government compliance requirements to meet this commitment is no small task. Although PWT was using software applications for day-to-day administration, the company recorded these maintenance requirements with a pencil and paper. This led to longer processing times, inefficiencies, and a growing staff workload. To address the issue, PWT worked with Microsoft® Certified Partner Cetaris to deploy the Microsoft Windows® platform and the Cetaris fleet maintenance software solution. This new solution helped PWT streamline operations to be more agile and increase operational visibility.

## Situation

The next time you're following behind a school bus during your morning commute, think about the heavy responsibility riding on those wheels ahead of you. To ensure the safety of all those on board, the bus needs to be maintained in excellent condition. Ensuring passenger safety is an everyday, top-of-mind concern for companies such as Pacific Western Transportation (PWT). PWT carries more passengers annually than the population of Canada and has a yearly mileage that spans the globe 12 times over. With a fleet of 2,000 school buses, luxury coaches, and chartered buses, the Calgary-based company is one of the largest privately owned transportation companies in Canada. PWT prides itself on providing the most mechanically sound, state-of-the-art vehicles on the road. Delivering on that commitment, however, is no small task.

By law, PWT is mandated to schedule and report maintenance on every vehicle and pass regular federal inspections. Although PWT was running its business using common desktop applications, including the Microsoft® Office System, employees did not use these applications to track the safety compliance requirements. Instead, they recorded the information manually, which led to longer processing times, inefficiencies, and a growing staff workload. In addition, employees had no way to easily assess and benchmark maintenance activity from a collective perspective. The company needed a faster, more efficient way to keep up with this documentation.

"Certain repairs happen repeatedly, such as alternator starter, heater motor, and battery failures. However, we lacked an efficient way to track them with our old system," says Thomas Schmidt, Corporate IT Manager at Pacific Western Transportation. "Our goal was to keep more accurate records of component failures so that when we bought new

vehicles, we knew how to improve the specifications in order to obtain a lower life cycle cost."

## Solution

After a thorough search for the right solution, PWT turned to Microsoft Certified Partner Cetaris to modernize its maintenance operation. The company worked with Cetaris to deploy its Fleet Assistant maintenance software solution.

"The key advantage of working with a Microsoft Certified Partner is that if someone purchases our software, they can trust that the solution will work with the [Microsoft] Windows® [operating system] platform and that we have the know-how to support it," says Ric Bedard, President and Founder of Cetaris. "Building Fleet Assistant based upon the Windows interface has also helped our customers to minimize training and encourage employee adoption."

Fleet Assistant for Windows XP operating system is a centralized client/server application that tracks, analyzes, and presents critical maintenance information, enabling managers to keep better track of the fleet. The application is designed to run on Windows XP client machines, and work seamlessly with Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 database software and Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 operating system—one of the key reasons PWT chose the Cetaris solution. Both SQL Server 2000 and Windows Server 2003 are part of Microsoft Windows Server System™ integrated server software.

"We have invested in Microsoft technology, so integration with Windows was extremely important to us," says Schmidt. "The Cetaris solution expands the capabilities of our current Windows workstations and brings greater value to our business allowing us to do so much more. We can pinpoint exactly where we spend our time, calculate the costs

associated with that, and identify areas where we can improve our operations.”

## Benefits

With Windows XP and Fleet Assistant for Windows, PWT was able to effectively enhance the maintenance operation by improving vehicle uptime and reliability; reducing chronic repairs; controlling parts and labour costs; maximizing warranty reimbursements; and creating a more reliable, streamlined flow of information among people who service and support the fleet.

### ***The End of the Paper Trail***

Previously, the company operated manually leading to longer processing times, inefficiencies, and a growing staff workload. Since deploying Fleet Assistant, PWT has virtually eliminated paper waste and has sped up its reporting significantly.

“Maintenance managers used to manually review and approve multiple stacks of work orders every morning. Now, they can quickly review the list on their desktop and enter the updates,” says Schmidt. “The time savings is excellent.”

### ***The Route to Better Investments***

With the previous manual system, maintenance managers received updates long after the work orders were completed. The new solution enables technicians, parts people, and managers to make proactive decisions based on real-time data. Fleet Assistant for Windows helps users pinpoint exactly which vehicle parts are causing the most problems, giving PWT the ability to improve the specifications for new vehicles.

“Most companies do not track warranties accurately. When a technician is working on a vehicle, the system automatically tells them when a part is under warranty so they know to save the old part for return. We can also

generate detailed reports that map out how we are spending our maintenance dollars, and document the amount of warranty we’ve captured,” says Schmidt.

### ***Driving Greater Efficiencies***

Fleet Assistant for Windows provides users with a view into PWT operations, benchmarking common items such as inventory levels, direct and indirect labour, labour efficiency, warranty reimbursement, and cost per mile. Greater visibility into vehicle failure patterns means the company can project maintenance costs with far greater accuracy. “With Fleet Assistant we can determine where maintenance is being done best across the different companies, establish best practices, and then share those standards across the organization,” says Schmidt.

### ***A Smoother Ride for the IT Team***

Computer reliability and stability are among PWT’s critical concerns. Windows XP answers this call by enabling compatibility with applications that the company was running under previous versions of Windows. The updated Windows software launches application fixes automatically, helping to lessen the burden on the IT team.

“From an IT standpoint, Windows XP has helped us reduce support calls and the time spent on infrastructure maintenance,” says Schmidt. “We’re able to be proactive, versus reacting to problems when they happen.”

### ***Down the Road***

With a stable and reliable computing environment now in place, PWT is looking to move to the next stage of its migration to Web Fleet Assistant.

Web Fleet Assistant 3.3 is built on the Microsoft .NET Framework—an integral part of the Windows operating system that provides the programming model and runtime for Web

## For More Information

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For more information about Cetaris products and services, call (416) 679-9555 or visit the Web site at: [www.cetaris.com](http://www.cetaris.com)

For more information about Pacific Western Transportation products and services, call (403) 248-4300 or visit the Web site at: [www.pwt.ca](http://www.pwt.ca)

services, Web applications, and smart client applications. It was created with the Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET 2003 development system and the Microsoft Visual C#® .NET 2003 development tool. Web Fleet Assistant is implemented on Microsoft SQL Server 2005 database software.

Web Fleet Assistant builds on the functionality of Fleet Assistant for Windows. The system is comprised of 14 modules that work together to track, analyze, and present maintenance information for buses, coaches, trucks, tractors, trailers, and other fixed or mobile assets. The modules include the digital dashboard, key performance indicators, asset, parts, work order, preventive maintenance, standard job, purchase order, supplier, warranty, reports, help, administration, and security. With these modules, PWT will continue achieving greater productivity through improved work flow and exception reporting.

“Users can customize the home screen according to the key performance indicators they want to measure, such as the number of repair orders in process or the amount spent daily on parts,” says Bedard. “Essentially, the digital dashboard translates the mountain of information available into meaningful data.”

## Microsoft Windows

Over the past two decades, Microsoft Windows® products have evolved from a single, one-size-fits-all desktop operating system into a diverse family of operating systems and mobile technologies. Today, Windows products help people worldwide achieve their potential at work, home, and just about anyplace in between.

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### Solutions and Services

- Windows Server 2003
- SQL Server 2000
- Office 2003
- Visual C# .NET 2003
- Visual Studio .NET 2003
- Windows XP, Service Pack 2
- Microsoft .NET Framework

### Partner

- Cetaris

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