

CASE STUDY

Athens-Clarke County

40+

Vehicles

130,000+

Residents

24/7

Operations



samsara



Athens-Clarke County was awarded the 2020 Samsara Top Fleet Award for Excellence in Public Fleet Management for their industry-leading approach to public service.

Responsible for keeping Athens-Clarke County beautiful for more than 130,000 residents, the Solid Waste Department runs a lean team of just 65 employees and 40 vehicles. As home to the University of Georgia, Athens-Clarke County also sees an influx of 40,000 student residents during the school year. With services including residential trash and recycling, leaf and limb removal, compost, and litter pickup, the Solid Waste team runs a 24/7 operation, spanning 117 square miles.

To manage their mixed fleet of automated trash collection trucks, front load trucks, leaf and limb boom and sway cars, and passenger electric vehicles, the Solid Waste Department was looking for a fleet management platform that could combine three of their fleet technology vendors into one system. "We're always striving to find technology to help us be more efficient and effective for our residents," said Suki Janssen, Director of Solid Waste for Athens-Clarke County.



Samsara has taken our operations to a whole new level.

KOREY JONES

Collections Administrator

Each of the three distinct divisions within the Solid Waste Department—Collections, Landfill, and Recycling (Education)—found unique value in the Samsara platform. By leveraging Samsara’s real-time GPS tracking, routing and dispatch, and engaging safety features, Athens-Clarke County has been able to vastly improve the efficiency and safety of their services.

Optimizing routes to avoid hazards and improve efficiency

As the Collections Administrator and a 14-year veteran with the Solid Waste Department, Korey Jones is first and foremost focused on efficiency. Within the Collections Division, Jones and his team of 30 employees are responsible for trash and recycling collection, leaf and limb services, and compost for more than 10,000 residential customers, as well as downtown litter pickup.

Because of the scale of their operations and their limited staff, route efficiency and safety are paramount for the Collections Division to stay on

schedule and ensure each house is reached. The 37-foot long automated trucks used for solid waste collection have extendable arms used to pick up bins on the sidewalk. Because of this, the trucks must run on both sides of the road, posing a unique routing and safety challenge. “We don’t want drivers unnecessarily turning around or having to back up,” said Jones. “It’s a safety hazard.”

In order to minimize turnarounds and keep his trucks running on time, Jones leveraged Samsara Vehicle Gateways and the Samsara dashboard to get a bird’s eye view of the routes that pose the biggest challenge for his drivers. “I sat down to look at our longest route and noticed the driver was turning around too much. It was too dangerous,” said Jones. “I quickly found a way to minimize turnarounds on the route by running it like a snake. We went from 15 turnarounds to six, maximum.”

By using Samsara’s route playback feature, Jones was able to show drivers where they turned around unnecessarily and how they could avoid it moving forward. Not only does this help minimize hazards, but it also helps Jones and his team execute their

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY (Cont'd)

routes in less time. “Samsara allows us to navigate routes more efficiently to avoid unsafe driving behaviors and get the job done quicker,” said Jones.

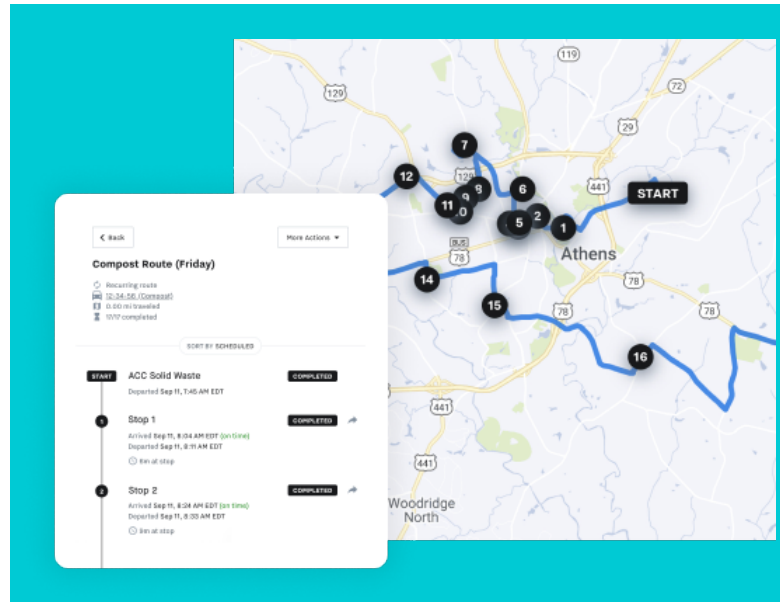
As an added benefit to their improved routes, the collections division has seen a 58% increase in fuel efficiency and a 19% decrease in fuel usage. This amounts to about \$6,000 saved over six months. With these savings, Jones and his team are able to reinvest the money to cover maintenance costs for their trucks. “When our automated trucks fall out of warranty, the maintenance costs are very expensive,” said Jones.

Their efficiency improvements also directly impact the communities they serve. “When we save money, it means we don’t have to raise rates for our customers. These savings allow costs to stay low for the community,” said Janssen.

Validating service to the community

With their previous GPS tracking system, drivers in the collections division had to remember to turn on their tablets in order for Jones to get location data. “A lot of the times a driver would forget to turn their tablet on, so we wouldn’t be able to track them at all,” said Jones.

Without critical GPS location data, Jones and his team had no way to back up their service in case of a customer complaint. Often, customers would call to say that a truck missed or skipped their house along their route. But in reality, the customer had forgotten to put their bins out to the curb. “We never just skip a



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SUKI JANSSEN
Director of Solid Waste



house,” Jones said. “If we skip a house, it’s because their bins were not out on time.”

When a house gets skipped for this reason, residents can call to have the collections division perform “return service”, where they will come back to pick up the missed bins for a fee.

As added security, drivers would also take photos and fill out a paper form to issue bin violations. But their old system could not support the volume of photo storage their drivers needed, leaving them with no proof to issue a violation. Not only was this workflow time consuming, but it also resulted in lost revenue.

Now, with Proximity Search—which allows Jones and his team to locate their vehicles during a specific time or location—they can prove the quality of their service and accurately bill customers who had a violation.

With mobile forms within the Samsara Driver App, drivers have the security of unlimited storage within the Samsara cloud to take photos and complete digital

violation documents. “Before, our drivers spent all day writing down violations on paper. Now, with their tablets, it takes seven seconds to cite a violation,” said Jones. “We believe that Samsara had helped us gain approximately \$1,920 in additional annual revenue,” Janssen said.

Increasing back-office efficiency with paperless DVIRs and Documents

One of the biggest challenges with Athens-Clarke County’s previous system was its inability to support digital workflows. Before Samsara, drivers would complete pre- and post-trip inspections on paper. This meant that Collections Administrative Assistant Nancy Flowers, had to spend several hours per week scanning and filing more than 3,100 paper documents into massive filing cabinets.

Flowers explained that some of their older drivers preferred the paper document system and were resistant to the tablet approach at first. “After a few weeks of using tablets and digital DVIRs with Samsara, now they refuse to use paper,” said Flowers. “Everything is now taken care of with Samsara.”

On top of these efficiency gains, the switch to digital workflows saves Flowers at least three hours per week in administrative burden.

With Samsara’s digital document uploads, Athens-Clarke County was able to eliminate one of their old software systems, allowing the department to reduce technology costs. “Now we use Samsara for everything,” said Jones.

Since going paperless, Athens-Clarke County has been able to reduce manual errors and decrease unsafe DVIRs by 56%. “The reduction in human error is where Samsara really helps us be more efficient,” said Stacey Farrell, Executive Director of Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful.

With this new system, Jones and his team are also able to resolve maintenance issues faster. “Being able to see the DVIRs in real time was huge. Now we have fewer trucks down, and every day we can see what to knock out to keep our fleet running smoothly,” said Jones.

Adapting quickly to COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Janssen and Jones were looking for a way to ensure that their drivers could remain safe while serving their community. They quickly thought of a way to adapt Samsara DVIRs to include health and safety checks for their drivers before and after shifts.

“Samsara was really helpful for us when COVID-19 hit because we had to implement safety protocols that we’ve never had before,” said Janssen.

In order to keep drivers safe, they customized DVIRs to incorporate protocols for hand and truck sanitizing, face masks, and more. “Samsara was helpful for establishing a health and safety routine for our drivers,” said Janssen. “With Samsara, we were able to establish a behavior change to keep our essential staff safe.”

Improving driver safety with gamification

Before Samsara, Athens-Clarke County didn’t have a way to properly track driver safety metrics. “Our old GPS tracking system was not even close to what Samsara provides. It tracked locations, but not diagnostics,” said Jones. Every month, his team would have a safety meeting, but without concrete data on things like speeding and harsh driving, there was no way to determine how their fleet was performing.

Since adopting Samsara and introducing Driver Safety Scores to benchmark driver safety behaviors, Jones has noticed a considerable difference in their attitudes towards safety. The Solid Waste Department now has a competition among drivers who receive a Safety Score of 100. Each month, Flowers gathers all the names of drivers with a perfect score. Then, for a personal touch, her grandma pulls one name out of the hat for the winner to receive a gift card for gas, food, or home improvement stores.

“Samsara has made safety conversations easier. It makes it easy to reflect on how you’re driving,” said Jones. Since they implemented driver scorecards and coaching tools with Samsara, Athens-Clarke County



coaching tools with Samsara, Athens-Clarke County has seen a 50% reduction in harsh driving events. In addition, average Driver Safety Scores have improved by 15%, from 79 to 91 out of 100 in just 6 months.

Not only have these safety metrics improved driver behavior, but the Solid Waste Department now has telematics data on speeding as proof in the case of citizen complaints about unsafe driving. “It’s saved us a few times,” said Jones. “Now, we can check the speed of our vehicles to exonerate our drivers in case of blame.”

Setting the standard for public fleets

“Samsara provides transparency to our Athens-Clarke County leaders and customers. Governmental transparency is part of the Mayor’s 2020 goals to have an accountable and responsive government. Samsara tracks our progress both in safety and routing to assist

our responsiveness as a Department,” said Janssen.

Thanks to their efficiency improvements, constituents in a private community nearby wanted to switch from their private waste provider to Athens-Clarke County Solid Waste Department. “Usually communities want to switch to private providers—not the other way around—so this speaks to the efficiency of our collections division,” said Janssen. “Our department is a leader within county government in terms of impact in the community.”

“Because of Samsara our department is more effective and more efficient,” said Farrell. “We’re now more proactive and Samsara has kept us at the place we want to be professionally on the state and local level.”

Find out how the Samsara platform can help your organization. Email us at sales@samsara.com.

