

# CITY OF

# AUSTIN, TX

# MAKING THE CUT

## AUSTIN, TEXAS, WAGES AN UNENDING CAMPAIGN TO LIVE GREEN.

Known as 'the City within a Park,' it has won awards for its environmentally friendly infrastructure since 2000, when it earned a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Silver Certification. A decade later, this metropolis on the Colorado River, population 1.7 million, embraces green initiatives in every possible way: from water conservation to sustainable landscapes, from habitat for native species to its Green City Action gardening and recycling program.

Crews at Austin's five public golf courses have been deeply involved in that effort. Lead Superintendant Nick Smitham and the city's Fleet Services recently demonstrated their renewed commitment to green infrastructure with the purchase of six Jacobsen Eclipse 322 Hybrid Greens Mowers. The story behind that decision and the benefits inherent in the technology illustrate the city's dedication to reducing its carbon footprint.

Smitham admits he had only so much money and initially planned to go with diesel mowers; diesel was approved by the city. But he went ahead and invited the Fleet Services and Parks Departments to see a demo of the Eclipse. When all was said and done, they recommended Smitham buy six of them.

"The golf division is an enterprise fund, the only one left in the Austin Parks and Recreation Department. It is not funded by the city," says Smitham. "It all comes through the cash register of the pro shop, though we work under the city policy and umbrella. Of course we want to be environmentally friendly. But as superintendant, I want as many pieces of equipment as I can for the money."



"The great thing about the 322s, which are in my eye the only true hybrid greens mowers out there, is they have no hydraulic oil. Others claim they have hybrid mowers, but they still require hydraulic oil."

Nick Smitham,  
*City of Austin Golf Superintendant*

Austin's Fleet Services and Parks Departments stepped in. They learned that the Eclipses, though higher priced, would save the golf division \$23,000 annually in fuel and oil costs for an annual fuel reduction of 4,356 gallons and waste oil reduction of 186 gallons. In total, the city's operating costs on the six machines would be reduced by 54 percent.

Fleet Services voted for the Eclipses. Parks Director Sara Hensley agreed. "We want to make this footprint goal for 2020. Let's give it a shot and we'll fund the difference," she said. In August of 2010, Fleet Services acquired six Jacobsen Eclipse 322 Hybrid Greens Mowers for three of Austin's golf courses—Jimmy Clay, Roy Kizer and Morris Williams.

Along with savings on fuel and oil, the 322s help keep the greens in pristine condition. According to Smitham, Austin is a city that plays golf 365 days a year. Ben Crenshaw and Tom Kite grew up there. Many Austin residents are talented amateur players. Yet, Smitham's six-man staff per course is a fraction of the number of technicians a private course employs. His team mows every green at all five courses daily—a total of 93 greens.

"The guys might be on the Eclipses 3.5 hours a day and all agree they're quieter and more comfortable than what we had before," says Smitham. "You get off and kick all the controls back to neutral—a one-step-off, one-step-on process. The arm rest with joystick control provides great maneuverability. They're popular with the crew."

Most important, the 322s support the city's green vision. "That's the great thing about the 322s, which are in my eye the only truly hybrid greens mowers out there," says Smitham. "They have no hydraulic oil. Others claim they have hybrid mowers, but still use hydraulic oil. They may have electric mowers, but they have hydraulic lift traction. With the Eclipse, the engine powers the generator, which runs an electronic lift and reels. We don't have to ever worry about hydraulic oil leaks on the greens."

Austin forges ahead with new strategies for green infrastructure and enhanced environmental quality. It seeks to provide services while conserving energy, water and fuel. The results of those efforts continue to gain national recognition. The Jacobsen Eclipse 322 is one small part of that.

## THE ISSUE

Austin maintains five public golf courses for a city populace avid about golf. When Nick Smitham, head superintendant, needed new greens mowers, the city's Fleet Services and Parks Departments were involved in the purchase decision. They sought green technology to stay on track with the department's Climate Protection Plan. The Plan calls for an increase in the department's use of non-diesel or non-gasoline alternative fuels to 55% by 2015.

## THE SOLUTION

New green technology from Jacobsen provided the solution. The city opted to buy six hybrid riding greens mowers to reduce diesel and oil use over the long term.

## THE RESULTS

Within the coming year, six Eclipse 322s are projected to save the golf division \$23,000 annually in fuel, oil and labor costs. Just as important, they complement the Parks Department's goal to increase non-diesel and non-gasoline alternative fuels as specified in their Climate Protection Plan. The mowers provide:

- Annual fuel reduction of 4,356 gallons
- Annual waste oil reduction of 186 gallons
- Annual operating cost reduction of 54% on the six machines
- Labor savings of 30 minutes per day per golf course due to faster travel between greens

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