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## WAPA Secures \$1 Million Grant From Dept. of Interior for Fleet of Electric Bucket and Pickup Trucks

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A \$1 million grant application by Virgin Islands Water and Authority has been approved by the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, WAPA announced Tuesday. The monies are earmarked to jumpstart WAPA's move towards developing a mixture of hybrid and electric fleet vehicles that include bucket and pick-up trucks along with associated equipment used to regularly maintain the territory's electric grids.

"WAPA embraces transportation electrification and is committed to leading by example through the initiation of electrification of its own internal fleet," said Governing Board Chairman and V.I. Energy Office Director Kyle Fleming.

According to the release, the shift of the vehicle fleet from fossil fuel to one that is electric powered is a primary conduit to energy resiliency in the Virgin Islands, and the territory is well suited to leverage the rapidly developing technology and infrastructure within the industry. “WAPA will strive to adopt initiatives and implement policy that reduces the dependence of imported and volatile fossil fuels. This is a critical move to bolster economic and societal sustainability,” said Noel Hodge, WAPA interim executive director / CEO.

Electric vehicles do not require costly and emission heavy gasoline or diesel fuels for operation and as the energy mix in the Virgin Islands continues to transition to more locally sourced renewable energy, the territory’s transportation landscape is primed to become fully self-sustainable.

The Department of Interior also approved a \$1.15 million grant for the V.I. Energy Office to procure battery electric vehicles for the central government as well as to develop a network of electric vehicle charging stations throughout the territory. The grant funding also supports the formal launch of the government’s GO FLEET initiative.

Both Mr. Fleming and Mr. Hodge noted that WAPA and the V.I. Energy Office are committed to transcending the pace of the transportation energy trends and the support of federal partners such as the Department of Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs is critical to achieving the objectives, the release stated.

Mr. Hodge thanked the Department of the Interior for approval of the grant as well as the WAPA staff members who worked diligently on the application. He also expressed gratitude to the V.I. Energy Office for its support and guidance in the process.

“We are not only adding more renewables to the grid by way of the mammoth strategic transformation plan WAPA has engaged, but we are seizing every opportunity to utilize cleaner, modern and more efficient technology across the utility. Together, we are building a brighter future,” he added.