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## **S2G BOBTAIL: POSITIVE REVIEWS WITH SOME CHALLENGES.**

Freightliner unveiled its S2G propane-fueled bobtail in 2012, making it possible for propane marketers to “run their fleet on the fuel they sell.” The bobtail filled a void that had existed since GM phased out production of its 8.1L engine for the medium-duty truck market at the end of calendar year 2009. Drivers have been delivering fuel since 2013 in the vehicle, which features an Allison 2000 series transmission and a fueling system from CleanFUEL USA. Its 8-liter, 339-hp purpose-built engine is supplied by Powertrain Integration (Madison Heights, Mich.). The engine provides 495 ft-lb of torque at 3100 rpm. Although some challenges have been reported, reviews are mostly positive.

Tim Schweppe of Arrow Tank reports that after dealing with some initial issues that he says are somewhat expected with a totally new product, the S2Gs seem to be on track. “Our most recent bobtail builds are out in the field pumping gas with little or no issues,” he explained. “However, fuel pump issues continue to plague the S2G, as we’ve just received word of a third fuel pump update within the last year. This latest update is in the form of a kit requiring a new hose fitting and electrical connector inside the tank to accept the new pump. Thankfully CleanFUEL is aware of the problem and [is] addressing it.”

In terms of popularity, he stated that of the bobtails Arrow builds, the diesel-powered chassis are still the selected chassis of choice by about a 10 to 1 ratio.

“However, the S2G can be an excellent fit in areas that have logistical challenges such as diesel fuel or diesel service availability,” he noted, adding that Freightliner, Powertrain Integration, and CleanFUEL USA are addressing the issues as they arise and making improvements through updates and service bulletins.

Schweppe did address issues such as “a learning curve for drivers and fleet managers in terms of driving behavior and finding the resources available to address concerns.” He mentioned a Midwest fleet manager who told him that a “two-footed driver” — driving with one foot on the accelerator and one on the brake — will trigger more fault codes during the day due to driving habits and tight engine control module monitoring parameters. A common situation for the two-footers is having the throttle and service brake active simultaneously — which results in a fault code. He noted that letting the vehicle roll backward while in a forward gear is another habit, whereas when going outside the program parameters will cause the engine to stall. Knowing the cause and making drivers aware of their habits is reducing the number of faults and keeping everyone happy, Schweppe explained.

He added that resources for the fleet manager such as Powertrain Integration’s Web-based service and support is “essential and extremely helpful. Problems can be avoided by knowing the basic preventive maintenance schedules. Change your plugs at 30,000 miles and don’t wait, otherwise you will soon find the motor down on power and running extremely rough. New plugs equals happy bobtail and happy driver.”

“The Freightliner S2G continues to improve and gain sales in the marketplace,” said Tucker Perkins, chief business development officer for the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), adding that marketers

who purchased it have stated a willingness to buy more. He has heard positive feedback from S2G user AmeriGas (Valley Forge, Pa.), and he added that Eastern Propane (Rochester, N.H.) has been a supporter of the vehicle from the beginning and has bought multiple S2Gs.

“I think Freightliner has gained maturity on how to position the propane product,” Perkins noted. “The dealers understand it a little better. So we expect better things out of Freightliner in 2016 as well.”