

VOLUME 2 · ISSUE 4

# The Eagle

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR EMPLOYEES  
OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®

MAGAZINE

**A MORE  
POWERFUL  
GROUND  
GAME**





# Mailin' it!

## The Official Podcast of the United States Postal Service

Nearly every person in America experiences the Postal Service every day — by saying hello to a mail carrier, passing postal vehicles on the street, visiting a Post Office or just by the simple act of reading one's mail. But really, how well do you know the United States Postal Service?

Mailin' It! takes you behind the scenes and explores the rich role and history of a thoroughly American institution. Join our hosts for a fun look at your United States Postal Service.

Visit [about.usps.com/newsroom/](https://about.usps.com/newsroom/) or scan the QR code below to listen.



**PUBLISHER**

United States  
Postal Service

Jeffery Adams  
Vice President,  
Corporate  
Communications

**EDITOR**

Yvonne Yoerger

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Cheryl De Falco

**DESIGN & LAYOUT**

Mike Quigley

**COVER ILLUSTRATION**

Jonathan Rice

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Daniel Afzal  
Xavier Hernandez  
Christian Lilakos  
Steven Parks

**ON THE COVER**

The Postal Service is launching a new ground shipping product, Ground Advantage, to take full advantage of its integrated mail and package network. It contributes to a key objective in the Delivering for America plan: following a bold approach to innovation. Find out more at [about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/delivering-for-america/](https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/delivering-for-america/).

**CONTACT US**

*The Eagle*  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Washington, DC  
20260-2166

**EMAIL**

[The\\_Eagle@usps.gov](mailto:The_Eagle@usps.gov)

**Improving our competitiveness and achieving long-term growth are core goals of the Delivering for America plan. This edition of *The Eagle* explores two interrelated drivers of our growth: transforming and modernizing our processing, transportation and delivery network; and launching new products that take advantage of our more capable and robust network.**



In the cover article, we explore one of those new products — Ground Advantage — a compelling shipping offering that competes directly with other ground products in the marketplace and significantly raises our game. Ground Advantage is possible because we have redesigned our national ground network based on a node-to-node logistics model, and configured our new network around Regional Processing and Distribution Centers, Local Processing Centers, and Sorting and Delivery Centers. This new structure will deliver more value to our customers, enable more product improvements and serve as a springboard for our future growth.

We delve into recent engagement with supervisors, who are always on the front line of implementing changes throughout the Postal Service. In keeping with the Delivering for America goal of investing in our people, we are continuing to give supervisors and others the tools they need on our journey to become the high-performing, operationally precise Postal Service that will serve our nation for decades to come.

We also look at a fantastic institution dedicated to commemorating and celebrating our rich and varied history: The Smithsonian National Postal Museum. This engaging museum is a must-see for any visit to Washington, DC — especially this year as the museum marks its 30th anniversary.

With these and future topics, *The Eagle* magazine will capture our progress and provide context for the strategies and initiatives that are guiding us toward financial sustainability and service excellence.

I hope you find this magazine useful and engaging. As always, thank you for the great work you do every day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louis DeJoy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Louis DeJoy**

Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer  
United States Postal Service

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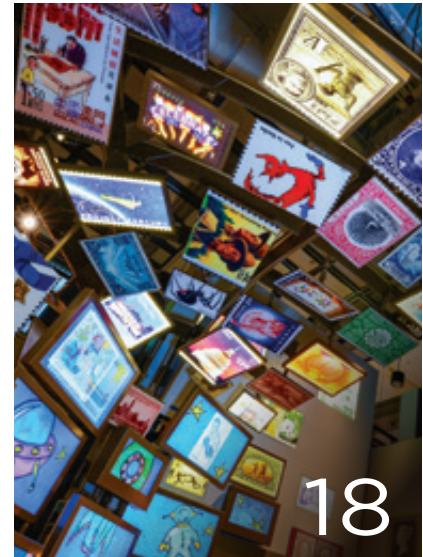
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## SPOTLIGHT SEARCH >

*Know a postal employee who is making a difference through volunteer work or community service? Please send Spotlight nominations to [The\\_Eagle@usps.gov](mailto:The_Eagle@usps.gov).*



**Think you know about the Delivering for America plan? Test your postal knowledge!** Visit [https://uspsIndevalfedramp.gov/qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2rTMZAfzAABmohE?Q\\_CHL=qr](https://uspsIndevalfedramp.gov/qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2rTMZAfzAABmohE?Q_CHL=qr), or scan the QR code to anonymously take a quiz.

# Start On Your Goals Now

Postal employee Rhoshonda Jones believes a group effort can help you achieve your personal goals.

## RHOSHONDA JONES

Address Management  
Systems Manager  
Bellmawr, NJ

**Rhoshonda Jones, an Address Management Systems manager, knows the value of a friend's support.** Illness motivated Jones to better manage her weight and improve her health with exercise. Recognizing she needed "somebody to work with me and get me off the couch," Jones sought the help of family and friends and recruited them to "do it with me!"

Inspired by her success, Jones founded Goals Start Now, dedicated to creating active lifestyles. Its guiding principles are no procrastinating, no excuses — but plenty of encouragement and camaraderie toward a fitness goal. The nonprofit organizes and promotes community outreach, events for charities and a wide range of fitness activities. Groups meet up for walking, cycling and kayaking. Goals Start Now even started a pickleball program in Willingboro, NJ, just as the sport was catching on. "Whatever it is you want to do, there's somebody in our organization to do it with you," Jones said.

The Propel 100 Charity Bike Ride is an annual Goals Start Now event that Jones manages. It includes five courses ranging from a 12-mile family ride to a 100-mile bike ride routed through seven townships and two counties in New Jersey. "I can't do more than 25 miles,

and I'm going to struggle," Jones said. "I am not a triathlete. But I am the prime example of what Goals Start Now represents — all skill levels and all ages."

Jones works with Virtua Health, a foundation based in southern NJ, to direct proceeds to cancer patient support services such as prescriptions, wigs and scarves (to compensate for hair loss) and home care. "A lot of people support cancer research," Jones noted, "but we want to help people right now with whatever they need."

"Goals start now" is a universal theme, relatable to individual struggles and organizational objectives alike. "Delivering for America, with its 10-year plan, set off a lightbulb for me," Jones said. "Nothing has to stay the way it was. You have to be able to change — and keep moving forward."

To learn more about the Goals Start Now organization, visit [yourgsn.org](http://yourgsn.org).

*Do it with me!*



# Flying in Formation

**More than 8,000 Retail and Delivery supervisors came together at a symposium series earlier this year to share Delivering for America insights.**

It was a first in the Postal Service. Supervisors from all Level 22 and higher Post Offices — the largest demographic in Retail and Delivery — gathered at six sessions around the country to meet in person with Postal Service leadership.

The meetings put into action an objective at the heart of the Delivering for America plan: investing in employees. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy addressed every meeting to personally share “the why” behind Delivering for America initiatives.

“People can inspire others to work if they explain what we’re doing and why we’re doing it,” said DeJoy at a session in Nashville, TN.

“You’d be surprised at the power of a good explanation. It makes what we do as an organization more meaningful to them. That is successful leadership.”

Chief Retail and Delivery Operations Officer Dr. Joshua Colin agreed. “Employees need to know ‘the why’ behind their work,” he said. “If they know why, they’ll be more inclined to do it.”

As Colin explained, “the why” behind many Delivering for America initiatives comes down to providing better service and staying competitive in the marketplace. “It’s not about doing it because headquarters says so — it’s about doing it for our customers,” he said.

*Left:* Postmaster General Louis DeJoy compares the Postal Service's transformation to geese flying together, helping all members stay in formation to move forward efficiently.



The symposiums were held in February and March, with two sessions each in National Harbor, MD; Atlanta; and Nashville. The meetings are just one example of how USPS is giving supervisors more tools and resources, as detailed in *The Eagle* article “Front Line Focused” in volume 1, issue 4.

Supervisor recruitment has increased, along with updated training and new supervisor career fairs. For those who attended the symposiums, a newsletter has been launched featuring monthly tips and messages from Colin.

Many participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity and for the excitement generated by networking with others in the same roles across the United States.

Lin Zhou, a supervisor at the San Jose, CA, Seven Trees Station, said there was nothing like it in his 30 years at USPS. “To be called here as

*Above:* Tools for Success exhibits gave supervisors the chance to learn about a range of USPS department resources and career assistance. Booths were sponsored by the Postal Inspection Service, Human Resources, Corporate Communications, Customer Experience, Field Maintenance, Law Department, Labor Relations, Operational Excellence and several Retail and Delivery departments.

a supervisor was unique,” he said. “I love the enthusiasm and passion — bring us the passion and we can take it back to our offices.”

Brian Mckenna, a Carol Stream, IL, supervisor, said “the why” was his biggest takeaway. “I’ve been aware of programs and the execution of them. Knowing the why helps put it in context,” he said. “It was very beneficial to talk directly to vice presidents and upper management and build that bridge with them.”

*Below:* A running — and often humorous — role-play during the symposiums showed the “Get It Right Post Office” team sharing best practices with their colleagues at the nearby “Opportunity Station.”

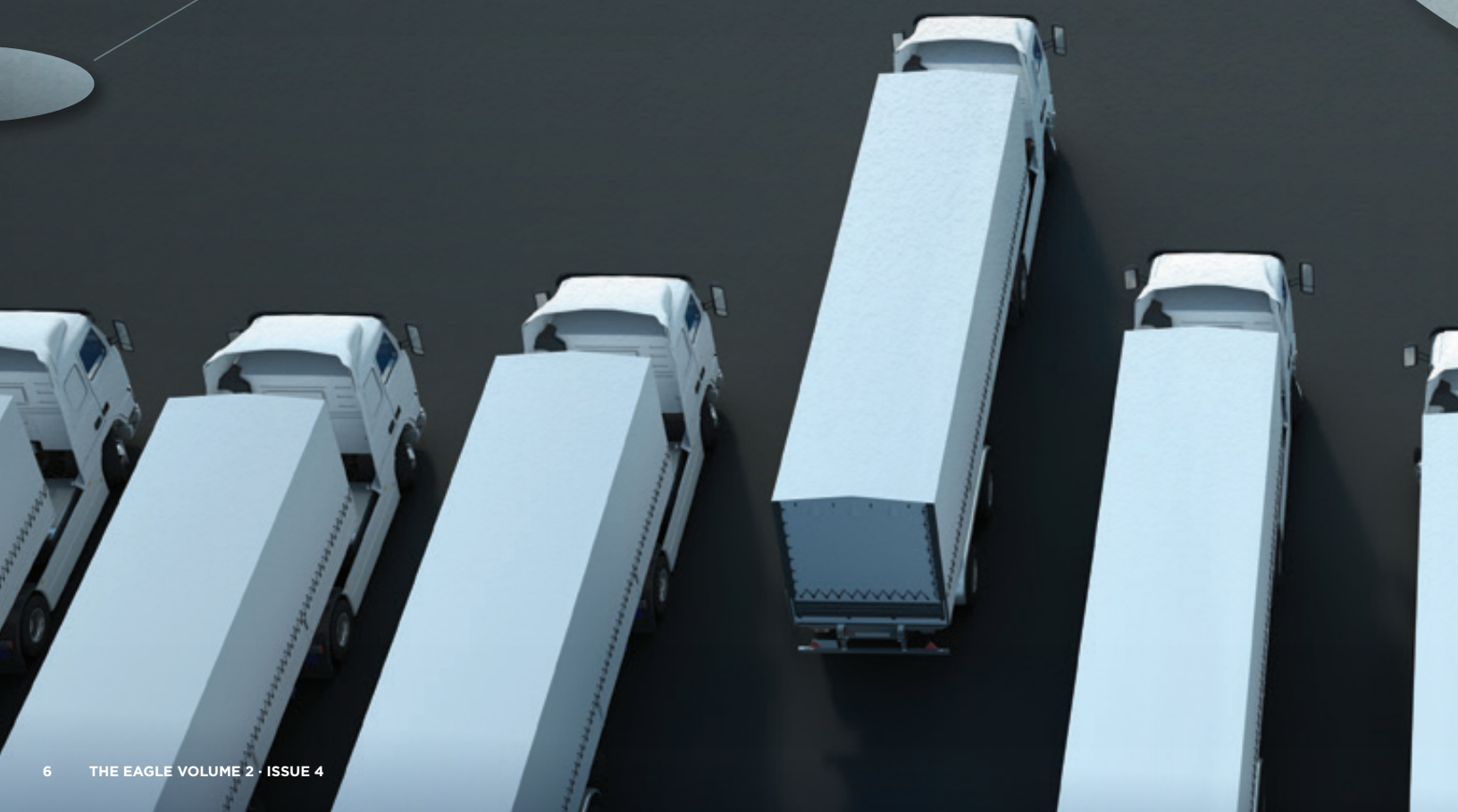
**“Our front-line supervisors play a critical role, helping our organization to operate with precision and efficiency. This was an investment in them and an investment in the organization.”**

— **Dr. Joshua Colin**, Chief Retail and Delivery Officer

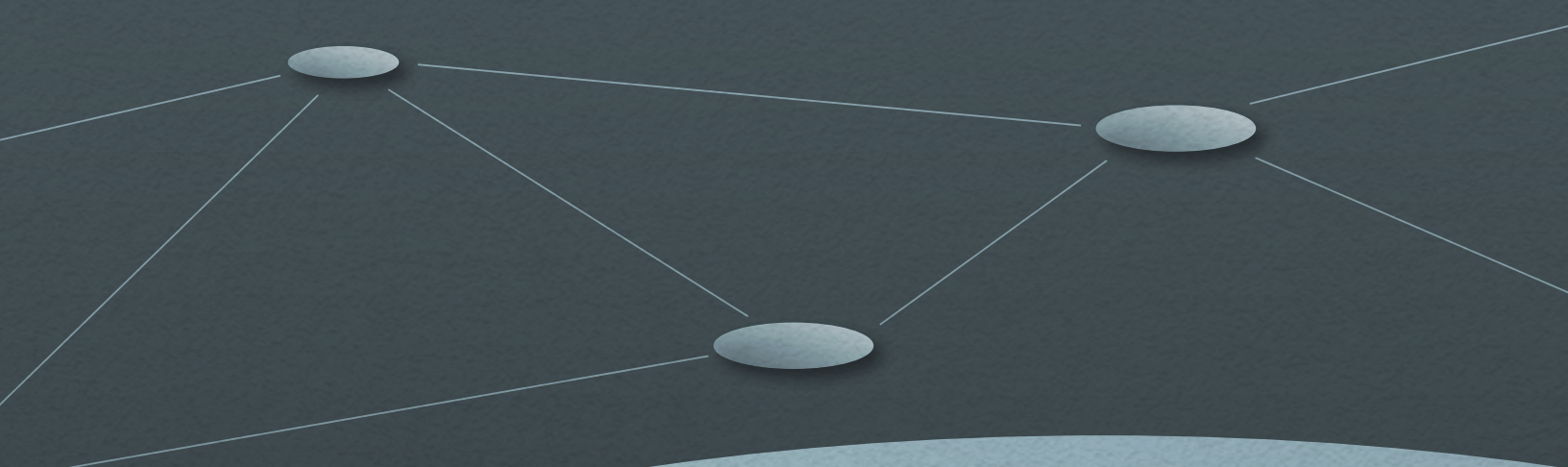


# A STRONGER POSTAL OPERATIONS NETWORK

The Postal Service, for the past two years, has been designing its future transportation, processing, delivery, and retail network and taking initial steps to put this structure into practice. Now the pace is quickening. New and refurbished facilities, a new operational model and better ways of working are coming into focus.







**F**or nearly its entire history, the Postal Service grew its operations with the nation, expanding the number of delivery units, processing facilities and truck trips as mail volumes increased and customer needs evolved. To a large extent, the operational model of moving and processing mail remained relatively unchanged — it just got larger and more complex.

Mail volume peaked in 2007 and has declined steadily since then, while package delivery has become a larger percentage of postal business. Financial losses, caused in part by this shift in demand, strained the organization's ability to invest in its operations. Not only did many of the physical USPS assets become outdated, inefficient and unneeded, the operational model that guided the movement of mail and packages had become inadequate, too. The Postal Service's capacity to deliver became more limited and operational excellence and on-time performance eroded.

Starting with a blank slate, no one would reimagine Postal Service operations to look like the legacy network of facilities and processes that now exists. Of course, there is no blank slate or magic eraser.

Instead, the Postal Service is enhancing its

“The promise of the Delivering for America plan is a modernized, transformed Postal Service. The network we are now building will rival that of our most sophisticated competitors, help us win a much larger share of America's shipping business and substantially improve the reliability, performance and value we provide to every sender and receiver of mail and packages throughout the country.”

— **Louis DeJoy**, Postmaster General

operational model with a combination of new and existing facilities supported by improved processes, workflows and logistics — all while ensuring that service and operational excellence steadily improves.

The Postal Service is now investing \$40 billion in modernization, including a network formed around Regional Processing and Distribution Centers, Local Processing Centers, and Sorting and Delivery Centers. This new model establishes a much more logical, reliable, precise and efficient network to improve service and competitive posture.



## Node-to-node: Regional Processing and Distribution Centers

In the transition over the next few years, mail and package processing will be conducted in approximately 60 Regional Processing and Distribution Centers, or RPDCs. These large facilities will not only process all originating mail volume and all package volume for a region, but will also be the conduits for national and regional transportation. Each one will serve as the control point — or node — for its region, managing the flow of mail and packages that enter or leave its jurisdiction.

The real power of this network comes from integrating mail and package flow through these nodes, from RPDC to RPDC. A package or mail tray traversing many states will travel on ground transportation from node to node in a direct flow from origin to destination. This node-to-node model enables point-to-point transportation — integrating both mail and packages — from one region to another and one RPDC to another. This simplified model streamlines workflows inside facilities and creates a very reliable and unified transportation system — with mail and packages traveling on the same trucks across the country. Reliability will also improve due to fewer handlings and air transportation trips, which are much less predictable than ground transportation.

The RPDCs will have common operational designs, engineering layouts, information technology, types of machinery, and human resources and training support. The use of large, open, clean spaces will create safer, more effective workflows for employees, eliminating workspaces spread over multiple floors or packages running on conveyors over mail processing equipment. One-off workarounds and offloads will also become relics.

The use of modern, high-capacity equipment will be a hallmark of these new facilities, with each RPDC featuring the fastest automated package sorters available. Combined with advanced material handling equipment, the process from loading dock to machine and machine to loading dock will be more effective and efficient — a crucial factor in reaching the Delivering for America goal of meeting or exceeding 95 percent on-time delivery across all mail and shipping product classes.

## Local Processing Centers

Each of the 60 RPDCs will be supported by Local Processing Centers, or LPCs. The primary role of these

facilities — many of which will have a large delivery unit attached — will be to process destination letters and flats and transfer mail and package volume to the region's delivery operations. These facilities will optimize mail flow and, like the RPDCs, will be modern and open, incorporating automation to reduce complexity, increase reliability and improve performance. Constant, repeatable, attainable and measurable work practices will enhance operational standards and drive service excellence.

## Sorting and Delivery Centers

The Sorting and Delivery Center, or S&DC, is a major component of our network transformation. S&DCs will replace many of the current 19,000 Delivery Units (DUs) by aggregating the operation of five to 10 DUs into one large facility, which can serve a wider geographical area and much broader customer base.

S&DCs are critical to the Postal Service's processing and delivery infrastructure and most will be created from existing postal-owned properties. They will house the tens of thousands of electric charging stations that the Postal Service will need to support deployment of 66,000 battery electric vehicles over the next five years, including at least 45,000 new, purpose-built, battery-electric next-generation delivery vehicles.

Centrally located within a local market, S&DCs will ensure quick and efficient turnaround for mail and package delivery, providing smaller shippers in the business community direct access to local next-day and same-day delivery. Under this redesigned network, four or five S&DCs will support each RPDC. The result is a highly efficient and streamlined approach to processing and delivery.

## Adding strength to strength

The combination of a much more efficient and powerful network design, modern and transformed facilities and operations — and sustained investment in technology, automation, vehicles and workplaces — will deliver continual improvements in service, reliability and competitiveness. And, it is all coming together to strengthen the Postal Service's existing capabilities and mission.



## ► Benefits of the New Processing and Delivery Network

**Better use** of the USPS ground fleet, with mail and packages traveling on the same trucks across the country.

**Fewer trips** with the node-to-node configuration of just 60 RPDC nodes.

# The Regional Processing and Transportation Ecosystem

Within each of the 60 regions in the contiguous United States served by a Regional Processing and Distribution Center (RPDC), there will be an ecosystem of Local Processing Centers (LPCs), Sorting and Delivery Centers (S&DCs) and Delivery Units (DUs).

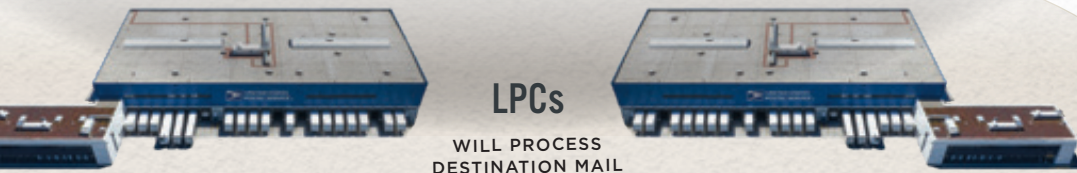
## RPDC



**60 RPDCs**  
WILL HANDLE ORIGINATING MAIL  
AND ALL PACKAGE PROCESSING

Many of the RPDCs will be developed from existing postal facilities. Some regions will require new facilities. New RPDCs have already been constructed near Atlanta; Charlotte, NC; and Indianapolis, and retrofitting or groundbreaking has started at more sites nationwide. The entire USPS geography is being assessed to determine the most appropriate mix of facilities within each regional ecosystem.

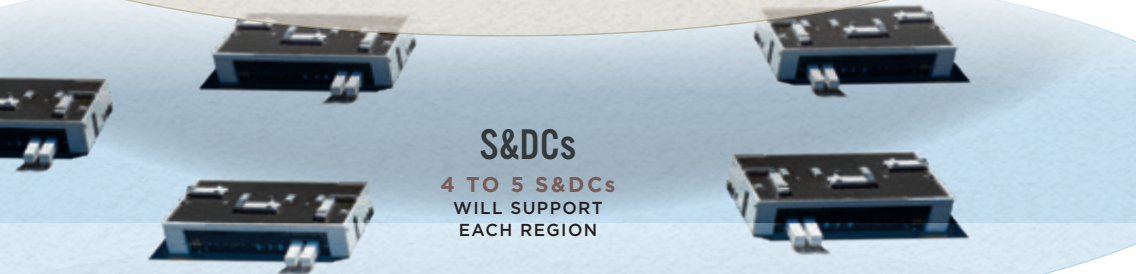
## LPCs



WILL PROCESS  
DESTINATION MAIL  
AND TRANSFER MAIL  
AND PACKAGES  
TO DELIVERY

Nearly all LPCs will be developed from existing postal facilities. It's anticipated that up to 180 stand-alone LPCs will be opened in the next few years.

## S&DCs



**4 TO 5 S&DCs**  
WILL SUPPORT  
EACH REGION

More than 30 S&DCs will be in operation by the end of 2023. Over the next five years, the Postal Service will establish 400 of these modern, highly efficient facilities as part of the improved delivery network. The current footprint of Post Offices, retail operations and PO Boxes will stay in place.

## DUs



**ROUGHLY 250 DUs**  
WILL SUPPORT  
EACH RPDC

Five to 10 DUs will be aggregated into one S&DC.

**Reduced trips**  
due to LPC  
and S&DC  
configuration.

**Improved timeliness** as  
a result of coordinated  
processing and  
transportation operations.

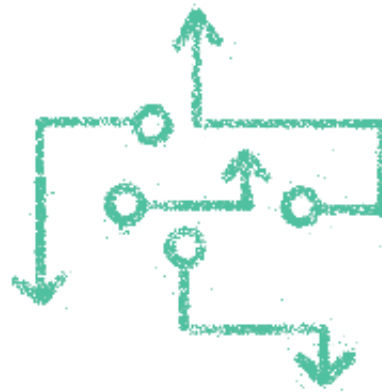
**Greater reliability**  
with more volume on  
the ground, less in  
the air.

**Lowered cost and a smaller  
carbon footprint** as a result  
of greater efficiency.

# **A MORE POWERFUL GROUND GAME**

The Postal Service operates the most comprehensive ground transportation operation of any civilian organization in the world. No one travels more miles or visits more delivery points six and seven days a week. Moving America's mail and packages from here to there — 421.4 million pieces a day, primarily via ground transportation — is an operational feat and a strength to build upon.





Everything that matters to customers — in terms of reliability, on-time performance, speed and transit time — depends on the efficiency of ground transportation. And, as the Postal Service builds a modern, world-class, high-performing logistics and transportation operation — redesigned with a much more powerful ground transportation model — there are opportunities to create new, highly competitive shipping products and offerings.

### **Integrating mail and package transportation**

The Postal Service gained approval to change its service standards for First-Class Mail and First-Class Packages in 2021. This was the first step in creating a logistics model that would allow mail and packages to travel together across the country on the same trucks to the same processing facilities instead of separate transportation and workflows.

Under the legacy model being replaced, Parcel Select and Retail Ground packages moved through 21 Network Distribution Centers (NDCs), while mail takes a different path, through approximately 300 Processing and Distribution Centers. Aside from being duplicative, this system had the disadvantage of limiting the Postal Service's capacity to move packages efficiently by ground transportation.

While not widely appreciated at the time, the 2021 change in service standards cleared the path for integrated transportation to move packages faster and more efficiently throughout the country.

### **Matching the competition**

The shipping marketplace is highly competitive. When an e-commerce order is placed online, many businesses rely on software solutions that make split-second decisions on which carrier to choose. Reach, price and reliability are evaluated, and the package is directed to the carrier that scores the highest.

Until now, the Postal Service has not had a ground product that matched effectively with competitors or that enabled shippers to make straightforward apples-to-apples comparisons. Customers looking for ground shipping services from the Postal Service evaluated three different options — Retail Ground, Parcel Select Ground and First-Class Package Service — each with distinct features and prices. By comparison, competitors make the choice easy: ground service or expedited air service.

The Postal Service was also disadvantaged by ground transportation service standards ranging from two to 10 days, a consequence of the NDC network transportation model. The result was a complicated set of offerings, compared with the competition.

## Ground Advantage: faster and more affordable

To take full advantage of its integrated mail and package network, the Postal Service launched a new ground shipping product at the beginning of July 2023. Called USPS Ground Advantage, the product has a 2- to 5-day service standard for the continental United States.

The most compelling feature of Ground Advantage is its 2- and 3-day reach. Shippers will find that the Postal Service can deliver their products to customers two and three states away within two days and deliver to customers four to six states away within three days. This structure will meet the needs of most businesses that fulfill e-commerce orders.

Ground Advantage's appeal is dramatically enhanced by the continuing improvements in service performance. Significant investments in infrastructure and technologies, expanded capacity associated with greater automation and processing space, and increased workforce stability have combined to reduce transit times and enhance on-time package delivery performance.

The USPS Ground Advantage name and marketing — and the retirement of Retail Ground and Parcel Select Ground — are intended to provide the shipping customer with a simple comparison with competitors'

**“As we tie the ground transportation model we are building to the magnificence of our last-mile delivery operations, we will have the most compelling ground shipping offering in the marketplace. We are creating our competitive power lane and an enduring business advantage.”**

— **Louis DeJoy**, Postmaster General

ground products — supported by compelling features.

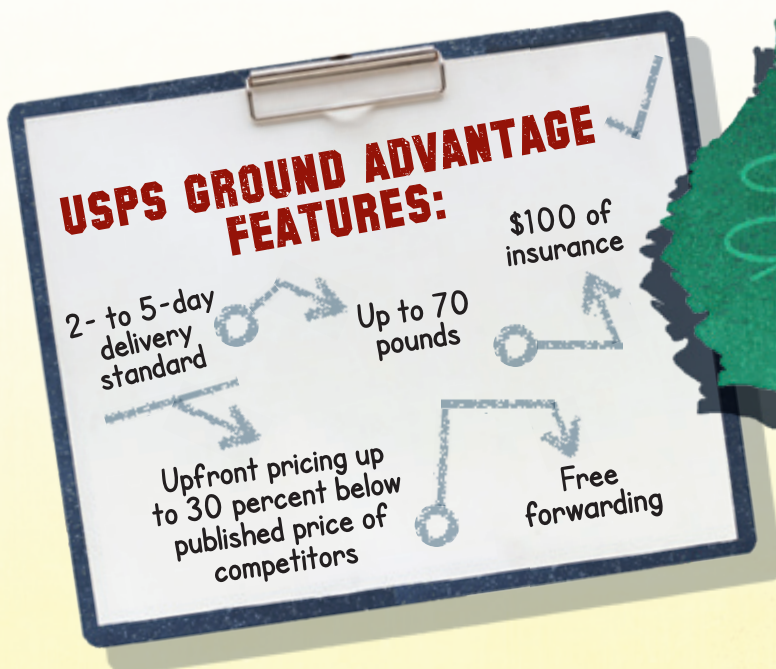
Benefits like upfront pricing, \$100 of baked-in insurance and free

forwarding to recipients who have moved all enhance reliable 2- to 5-day shipping on packages up to 70 pounds. The straightforward, upfront pricing structure — at rates significantly lower than the published rates of USPS competitors — should also attract shipping customers and steadily grow the Postal Service package business for years to come.

### Complementary offerings

So how does USPS Ground Advantage fit with other postal shipping products? Nearly all customers use a variety of shipping solutions from the Postal Service, depending on the needs of their business and the consumers they serve. Some require solutions that can be served by ground transportation, some require air transport to reach across the nation in just a day or two and some need to ship locally within a day.

With Ground Advantage, business customers can now choose between an affordable, reliable, 2- to -5-day service standard, or Priority Mail if they need faster cross-country service. But with the advantageous



price differential of USPS Ground Advantage, many customers may choose ground transportation with the idea of passing along shipping savings to their customers.

For customers' local delivery needs, the Postal Service suite of highly reliable destination entry options — such as USPS Connect Local — provides same-day and next-day delivery.

### **Priced to win**

With inflation still impacting the economy, businesses are highly attentive to cost when determining shipping value. With attractive and transparent rates, USPS Ground Advantage is designed to win customers. With upfront pricing up to 30 percent lower than the published rates of competitors — and with no surcharges, invoicing fees or add-ons like compounding fuel charges — customers can readily identify the comparative value of shipping with the Postal Service.

### **Delivering for America: growth strategy**

The Delivering for America plan is predicated on the idea that transformed and modernized transportation, processing, delivery, and retail networks will strengthen operational performance and

USPS Ground Advantage is poised to make the Postal Service much more competitive in winning shipping business away from rivals and to better serve the needs of America's businesses — and is only possible because of the network transformation now underway.

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**“The interest in USPS Ground Advantage has been tremendous. We are clearly meeting a need and adding real value for the shipping customer — and providing strong competition in package delivery that will benefit the Postal Service and the American business community.”**

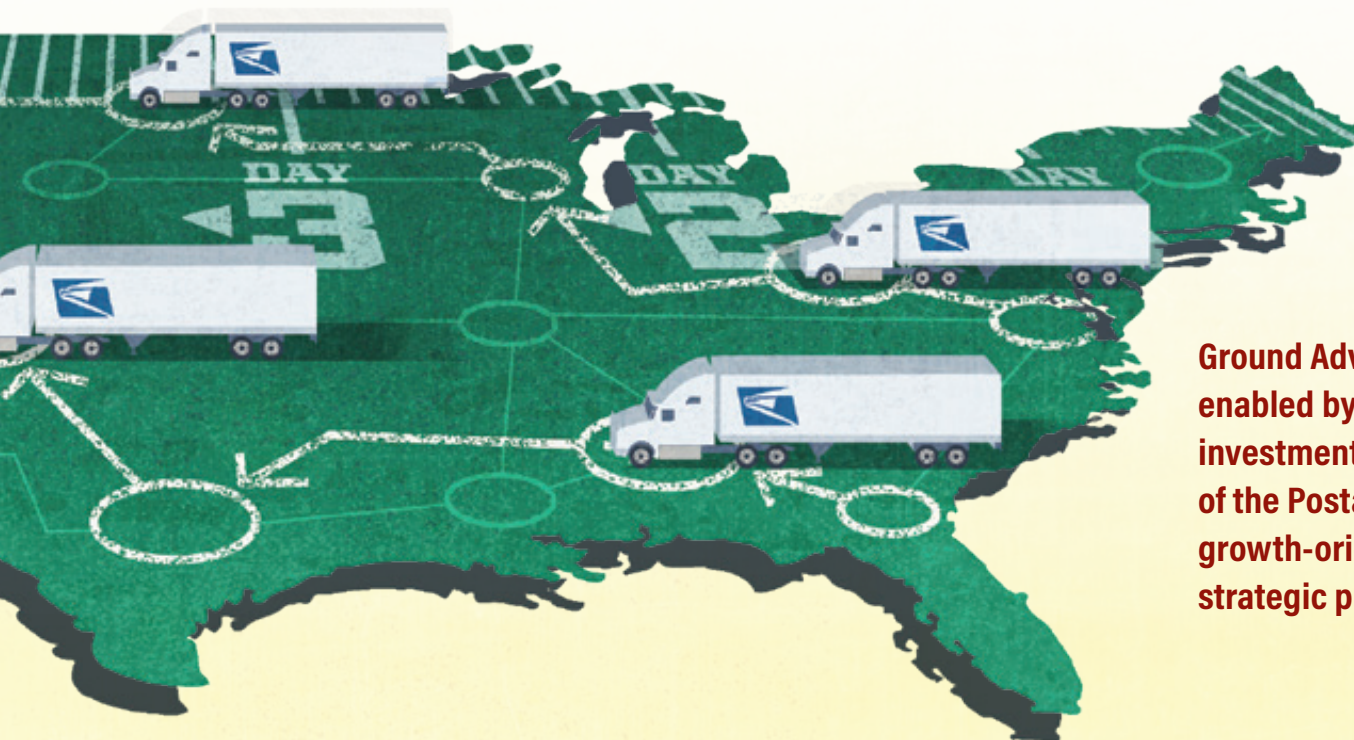
— **Jakki Krage Strako**, Chief Commerce and Business Solutions Officer

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reliability, improve the suite of postal offerings, deliver greater value to customers and the American public, and drive revenue growth. USPS Ground Advantage provides a strong case for each of these points.

Much like a football team that wins by being able to move forward effectively with its ground game, the Postal Service is clearing away the obstacles and creating an open lane to run past the competition with its own much-improved ground game.

## **THE REACH OF GROUND ADVANTAGE**



**Ground Advantage is enabled by network investments as part of the Postal Service's growth-oriented 10-year strategic plan.**

# GROUND ADVANTAGE:

**Shavon Keys**, vice president of Sales, and **Steve Jarboe**, director of Shipping and Commerce Strategy, talk about developing Ground Advantage and a reinvigorated shipping lineup as the postal network transforms and modernizes.

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**Ground Advantage represents a fairly significant change in the portfolio of Postal Service shipping offerings. What was the thinking behind the product and what kind of response do you expect from customers?**

**SHAVON KEYS:** We knew we needed to better align our offerings to customers' needs and keep our shipping growth trajectory moving upwards over the next decade. We have been growing our package business significantly over the past decade and want to keep that trend going. The most important goal was to have a national ground product with the same or better characteristics as our main competitors, so that customers could make an apples-to-apples comparison in terms of reach, reliability, weight, insurance, tracking and price. What we've created is arguably better than our shipping competition — and that's why we're seeing strong customer interest.

**STEVE JARBOE:** Frankly, we were missing out on a lot of revenue because we were not

providing a fully integrated set of ground shipping solutions. The real spark for Ground Advantage was looking at our processing, logistics and delivery network changes and realizing that we have a fantastic 2- to 5-day ground capability that will reliably reach the entire continental United States. This was always part of the Delivering for America plan — service standard changes coupled with a reoriented logistics model. Now we're leveraging the growth potential of an exceptionally efficient ground network.

**What goes into creating a new product for the Postal Service? How do customers influence the development of a product like Ground Advantage?**

**SHAVON KEYS:** We talk to customers — large and small — every day, and we're constantly competing for their business, so we have a good sense of what the marketplace needs. The art of developing products is matching the strengths and capabilities of the



**STEVE JARBOE**

Director of Shipping and  
Commerce Strategy



# A PRODUCT WITH PURPOSE

**SHAVON KEYS**

Vice President of Sales

Postal Service to what the customer values. Ground Advantage is a very compelling idea because our changing network capabilities align nicely with all the opportunities occurring in the shipping marketplace. The timing is especially good for us, given that many shippers are reevaluating needs and partners post-COVID.

**STEVE JARBOE:** The Postal Service is no different from any business that needs to continually optimize its offerings to be competitive. We do the same market research that our competitors do, we test ideas and we model the impact on our business. Success with a new product like Ground Advantage means our customers value the offering, which will drive volume and lift the bottom line for us.

**A central tenet of the Postal Service's Delivering for America transformation plan is the generation of \$24 billion in new revenue through innovative products and services. How does Ground Advantage fit into this strategy?**

**STEVE JARBOE:** Ground Advantage is part of a suite of offerings that includes

Priority Mail and our USPS Connect regional and local destination entry solutions. All customers have a range of needs, speeds and distances to meet the shipping demands of their businesses. When large customers look at a shipping partner, the anchor is most often the 2- to 5-day delivery offering — this accounts for most of the volume and it's where we need to provide real value. We're very optimistic about the total value we'll be able to deliver to customers because we have an outstanding anchor offering in Ground Advantage — that's the biggest piece of the pie. So, while some customers may use Priority Mail a little less, we'll gain much more volume with Ground Advantage.

**SHAVON KEYS:** The most important thing to understand is that with the Postal Service's unparalleled reach, Ground Advantage will win volume from our competitors. Having a full suite of solutions that includes an excellent ground product makes it easier to sell all our shipping offerings. Our customers are very knowledgeable about how to extract the most value for their shipping dollars, so our best strategy is to create and offer the solutions that provide the best value to our customers — and that's what Ground Advantage does.



*We Go Everywhere!*

# ZIP Code™ 33040

The southernmost Post Office in the continental United States is in Key West, FL. To get there, drive down U.S. Route 1 — preferably in a convertible with the top down — and cross the Seven Mile Bridge to ZIP Code 33040.



## Key West, FL

Key West started as a boisterous sea town of “wreckers” who collected salvage from shipwrecks off the coral reef. Wrecking was a hazardous business that brought in seafarers and dock hands — and a profitable one that attracted insurance agents, lawyers, speculators, merchants and entrepreneurs.

In the early 1800s, Key West was reportedly the richest city, per capita, in the country, thanks to an 1825 law that required all shipwrecked goods found along the coast be brought to the United States. Before the law, it was easier for wreckers to off-load in Cuba or the Bahamas.

The Postal Service has been an intrinsic part of the Key West community since the town’s earliest days. The island’s first Post Office opened in February 1829. For the next six decades, the town’s postmasters served residents from a succession of small, nondescript rooms and wooden buildings that, like many local houses, were prone to hurricane or fire damage.

*Left:* The Southernmost Point Buoy in Key West, FL.

That all changed in 1891 when the federal government opened an impressive three-story red brick building on **Front Street** that dominated the skyline over the town’s main square and waterfront.



*Above:* The building where international airline Pan Am sold its first passenger tickets now houses downtown Key West’s First Flight restaurant and the southernmost brewery in the continental United States.

This building housed a Post Office alongside U.S. Customs and the District Court for four decades until they all relocated in 1932 to an equally monumental federal building a few blocks away.

Both buildings are still prominent in Key West — one as home to the **Key West Museum of Art & History**



*Far left:* Red panels of the Key West lighthouse were placed in the direction of dangerous reefs to warn mariners at sea.

*Left:* A view of Mallory Square Dock (far left) and the red brick Key West Museum of Art & History at the Custom House, originally home to a U.S. Post Office, courthouse and custom house (far right).

at the **Custom House** and the other still functioning as a customs office and courthouse — and both are nationally recognized as historical, architecturally significant properties.

Mail also played a crucial role in turning a fledgling Key West business into one of the most iconic global brands of the 20th century. That company was **Pan American Airways**.

Like many U.S. airlines, Pan Am traces its beginnings to a contract to carry mail. Airmail flights out of Key West began in 1920, but for Pan Am, the pivotal date was Oct. 19, 1927, when it completed a demonstration flight between Key West and Cuba's capital, Havana — in a borrowed plane, no less. This inaugural flight marked the beginning of regularly scheduled international airmail service.

Pan Am's heritage is celebrated today at **First Flight Island Restaurant and Brewery** in the heart of Key West's downtown, where you can sip beers from the southernmost brewery in the continental United States — in the very building where Pan Am sold its first tickets.

Key West has also attracted its share of famous residents. Author **Ernest Hemingway** was drawn to the island's adventurous lifestyle and remote location and wrote some of his best work, including "For Whom the Bell

Tolls" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," from his house on Whitehead Street. Playwright **Tennessee Williams**, author **Shel Silverstein**, poet **Robert Frost** and former U.S. president **Harry S. Truman** also called Key West home.

Another celebrated name, **Jimmy Buffett**, came to town in the 1970s when Key West was a mecca for beachcombers and bar hoppers. Buffett soaked up the breezy lifestyle and wrote songs that soon had tourists and "Parrot Heads" flocking to Key West looking for Margaritaville.

Tourism is now the largest employer in Key West. Gift shops, bars and eateries line **Duval Street** in Old Town. A few blocks over, the **Shipwreck Museum** features artifacts and reenactments of the island's

maritime history. **Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park** and its beach are popular for narrated tours, hiking and snorkeling. More adventurous visitors can take a sea cruise to **Dry Tortugas National Park** (one of Hemingway's favorite fishing spots). In the evening, sightseers gather in **Mallory Square** to be entertained by acrobats, fire-eaters and other street performers — part of the **Sunset Celebration** nightly art festival.

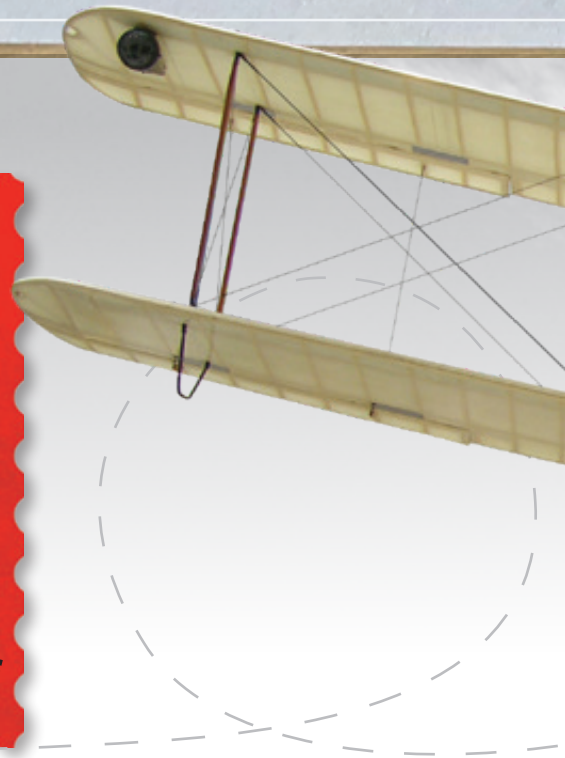
The **"0" mile marker** at the end of U.S. Route 1 is a must-see tourist stop, where visitors can take a selfie and step into the End of the Road Gift Shop to pick up a postcard to send home.

*Below:* Ernest Hemingway's house sits across from the Key West Lighthouse.





**30**  
**YEARS** *of*



# Advancing America's Postal History

Where would you go in Washington, DC, if you wanted to see artifacts from the Titanic, a detonator used in a train robbery, an Alaskan dogsled and mail that's traveled to the moon — all under one roof? As unlikely as it may seem, the answer is the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.



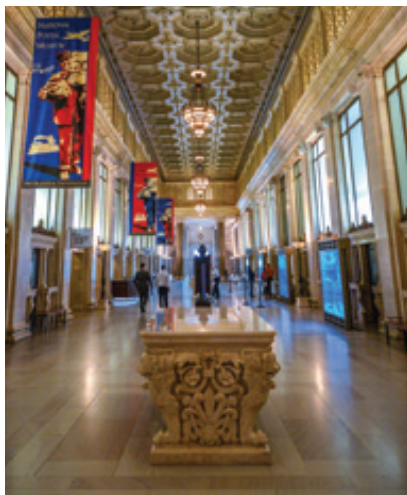
**T**he museum houses one of the world's great collections of stamps and presents an unparalleled look at the role the United States Postal Service has played in both shaping and reflecting America's history. As it celebrates its 30th birthday this year, the Postal Museum continues to elevate its role in telling the story of the United States through the unique lens of the mail.

The Postal Museum touches on nearly every facet of the American experience — as well as giving an international perspective through its renowned Stamps Around the Globe gallery. The surprising breadth of collections and special exhibits makes it a unique stop for national capital residents and visitors alike.



### Finding a home

Much like the story of many Americans, the story of the Postal Museum begins with the search for a place to call home. The National Philatelic Collection — the stamp collection at the heart of the museum — was established in 1886 with the donation of a single sheet of 10-cent Confederate postage stamps. As the collection grew, it was occasionally relocated: first to the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building on the National Mall and then to the National Museum of American History, where the display was



*Above:* Once the Washington City Post Office, the museum lobby reflects the original grandeur of its beaux-arts-style construction.

enriched with additional history on the Post Office Department and stamp production.

Then, in the late 1980s, the Postal Service was mulling over what to do with a collection of historical items stored and protected in a special vault in the basement of postal headquarters. At the same time, the Postal Service was in the process of shutting down operations at the City Post Office Building, a gorgeous beaux-arts structure that had served as the main Post Office for Washington, DC, since its completion in 1914. The timing couldn't have been better. The Smithsonian and the Postal Service set in motion the process of jointly establishing a museum to showcase the National Philatelic Collection and a variety of historical items.

### Planes, trains and automobiles

After extensive renovations, the Smithsonian National Postal Museum opened to the public in 1993, with the former Post Office's historic lobby and lower level devoted

*Images:* In the museum atrium, displays chronicle the evolution of mail transportation, including an 1851 Concord mail coach, a 1931 Ford Model A Parcel Post truck — and, suspended above, a de Havilland DH-4 airplane. Other exhibits range from vintage postal uniforms to stamps (like the Inverted Jenny) and old letters.

to its vast collection of historical items dating back to Colonial times. In addition to rare postage stamps and archival documents, the museum boasts one of the world's most comprehensive philately and postal history libraries, with more than 40,000 volumes. In its 90-foot atrium, an 1851 stagecoach and a reconstructed railway mail car are on





*Left:* Visitors to the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery step into an all-encompassing display of stamps and videos. The museum's extensive collection of national and international stamps includes iconic figures from baseball: Babe Ruth and Jackie Robinson.



display, while three vintage airmail planes hang suspended from the atrium ceiling.

After 20 years, the Postal Museum expanded its footprint in the building to 100,000 square feet, affording the opportunity to finally build out a space befitting its unparalleled stamp collection. Named the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery after the philanthropist and philatelist benefactor, the exhibition contains more than 20,000 objects — including every U.S. stamp — and is the largest gallery dedicated to philately in the world.

### Telling a story

In addition to serving as a mecca for the more than 50 million stamp

aficionados around the globe, the Postal Museum also aspires to appeal to the uninitiated. To that end, its curators are always finding innovative ways to engage visitors.

For true crime enthusiasts, there's the "Behind the Badge" exhibition, which explores the mission of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and how it helped catch some of the country's most notorious criminals, from Charles Ponzi to Unabomber Ted Kaczynski.

For sports fans, "Baseball: America's Home Run" celebrates the unexpected ways the national pastime and postal history have intertwined. It features rare commemorative stamps, fan mail and other artifacts on loan from the National Baseball Hall of Fame — including a bat used by Babe Ruth — for an exhibit that will be featured through early January 2025.

The museum has hosted numerous such exhibitions over the years, showcasing objects with a postal nexus sourced from the RMS Titanic (RMS stands for Royal Mail Ship), the personal stamp collections of Amelia Earhart, John Lennon and Queen Elizabeth II, and an exploration of America's National Parks.

### The next 30

So, what's in store for the next three decades of the Postal Museum? The limits lie only in the creativity and imagination of its curators — and they're full of ideas. Timely exhibits will always play a prominent role in enticing the broader public, and you can expect more culturally relevant programs that reflect recent or ongoing events. At the height of the fanfare surrounding "Hamilton: An American Musical" on Broadway, the museum unveiled "Alexander Hamilton: Soldier, Secretary, Icon," which displayed some of the Founding Father's original letters and other artifacts. In response to the conflict in Ukraine, the museum is now displaying a collection of stamps from the nation, including a 1918 set as well as recent stamps issued by the country's national postal operator, Ukrposhta.

In a city with some of the most iconic tourist destinations in the world, the Postal Museum is an architectural and cultural jewel. Not only does it enjoy the unique advantage of catering to a hobby beloved by millions, it is also a one-of-a-kind location for a look at a unique slice of American and international history.



*Left:* Mail was transported and sorted on Highway Post Offices (HPOs) from 1941 to 1974. The museum's bus is not exhibited, but mail delivered by HPOs is on display by the Railway Mail Service car.



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