

DPS gets new wheels for its parking division

■ University parking officials buy a shiny new truck after years of driving nearly 'defunct' vans

By Eric Martin
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sleek curves and shiny chrome gleam on a white truck cruising campus with the Department of Public Safety seal on a door panel. It's the parking and transportation division's new baby, with that aromatic new car smell and a youthful 331 miles on the odometer.

The department bought the 2002 Dodge Dakota three weeks ago to boost its nearly defunct fleet of Chevrolet Astro vans. The officers used the boxy vehicles — referred to by some officers as "pizza vans" — to enforce parking rules and store tools for repairing parking meters. "We were down to our last surviving van," DPS parking and transportation manager Rand Stamm said. "They are really beaten up."

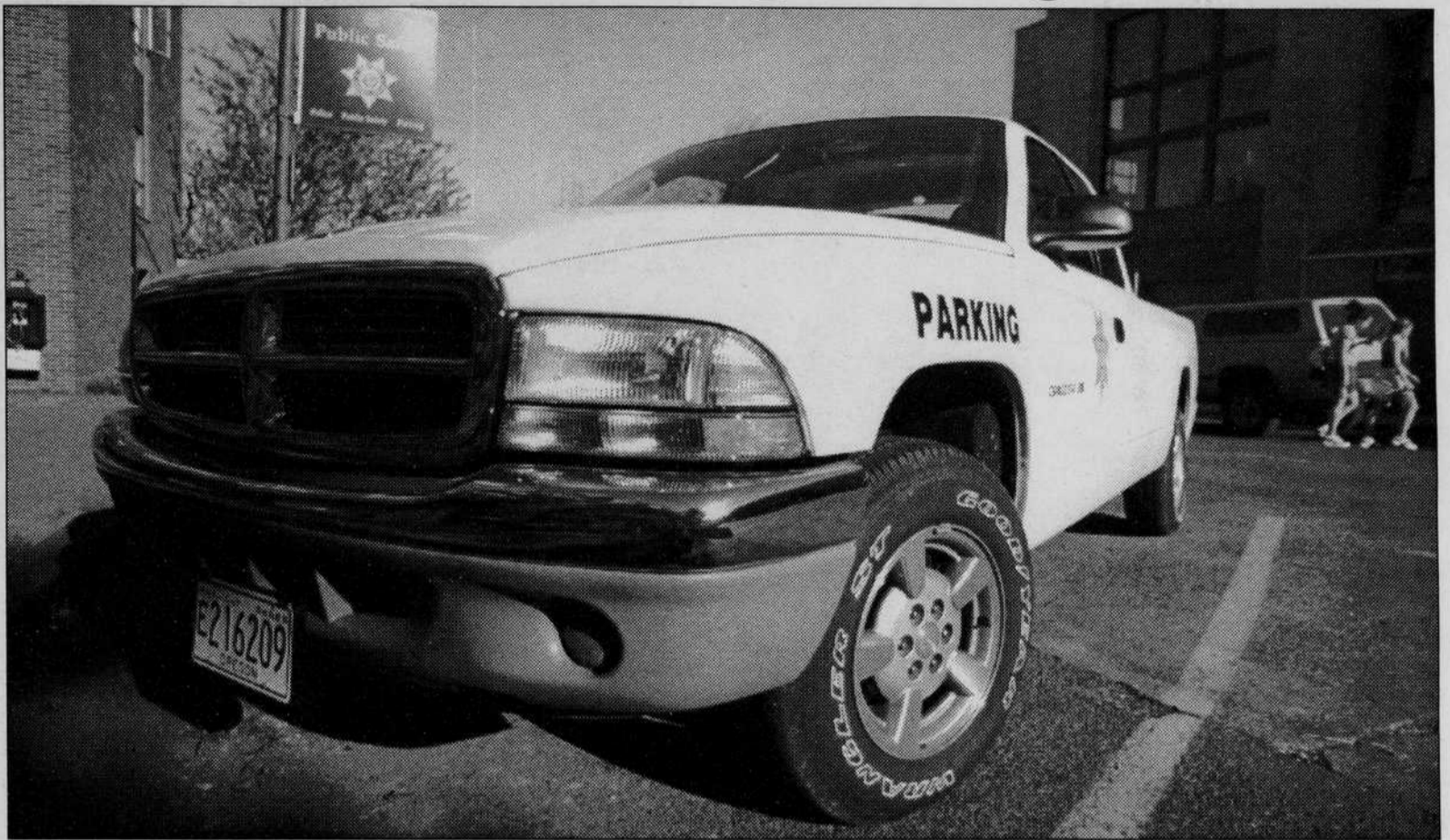
DPS Patrol Lt. Herb Horner said the department retired another van two months ago because it was leaking fluids.

"There was mildew growing inside," he added.

DPS chose the Dakota because of its versatility, hauling capacity and price tag of \$15,385, Horner said. Dodge.com suggests a retail of \$18,960 for the same model.

The department bought the vehicle with reserves from its parking fund, which it uses to repair parking lots and pay patroller salaries.

The truck will be handy for moving barricades and signs to accident scenes, and for events such as basketball games, Stamm said. DPS plans to mount a panel with



Thomas Patterson Emerald

The University's Department of Public Safety has purchased a new Dodge Dakota to shore up its fleet of vehicles. Certain DPS officers have judged the new ride 'cool.'

pulsing yellow arrows atop the cab to direct traffic in emergency situations.

Stamm said the buzz among parking officers is that the new truck is "cool," and officers seem eager to take it for a spin after enduring years of automotive inadequacy.

"When you've been driving vehicles that are on their last legs,

it's really nice to have a vehicle that is new and works," Stamm said — one with air conditioning and a 3.9-liter V-6 engine, too. "I actually haven't had an opportunity to drive it yet."

Others said officers downplay any fascination with the new hood full of horses.

"I haven't heard them express undying thanks for it," DPS Associ-

ate Director Tom Hicks said. "But I think they're happy to have well-maintained vehicles."

Up to four employees use the new truck per day. Enforcement officers drive Jeep Cherokees. But Stamm said there isn't much danger of civil war or mutiny in the office over who gets to take out the shiny new club cab. Horner assigns officers to vehicles.

The Dakota gas pedal will typically be under the foot of parking enforcement officer Douglas Clegg. The truck replaces the rickety van he drove.

"It's obviously quite a different vehicle than the van. ... This thing actually has a front end," Horner said.

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