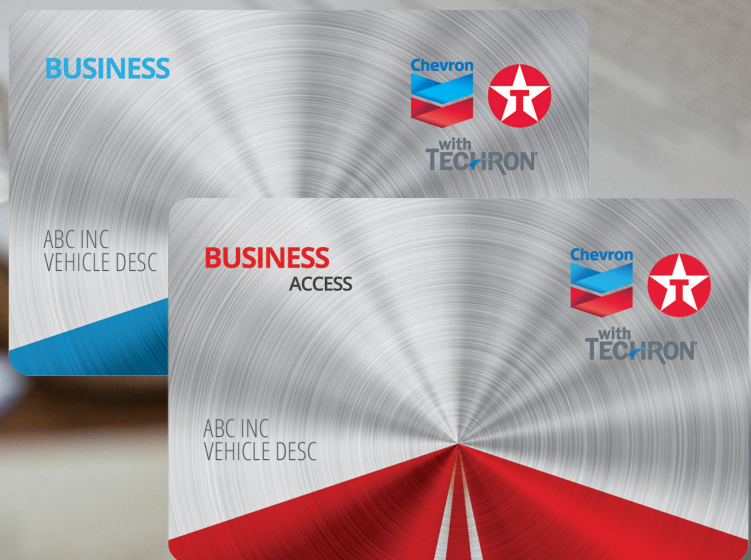# How business fuel cards help make it easy to **automate fuel expense management**

When your business relies on vehicles to get the job done, fuel expense management can have a meaningful effect on your bottom line. It doesn't matter if you're managing a handful of vehicles across a local area, or a complex, national-scale fleet. Fuel and vehicle maintenance expenses play an important role in determining the ROI your vehicles generate for your business.

Many businesses find themselves stuck in a manual process for managing these expenses. This can include collecting receipts, assembling expense reports, and spending hours entering expense data and building financial reports.

Automated fuel expense management is more than a way to track spending more efficiently. It can also help you evaluate and control vehicle-related expenditures.

Many business owners are aware of the benefits of an automated, analytics-rich solution, but may believe that a change would be too disruptive.

With advanced reporting tools and a powerful framework for streamlined implementation, business fuel cards can offer a more efficient system to organizations of all shapes and sizes—without painful operational disruptions.

In this article we explore:

- The limitations of manual, "after-the-fact" fuel expense reporting.

- The broad advantages of an automated solution for tracking and controlling fuel expenses in real-time.

- How fuel cards help the transition to an automated system easy— while offering mobile-friendly support, flexible management tools, and detailed reports.
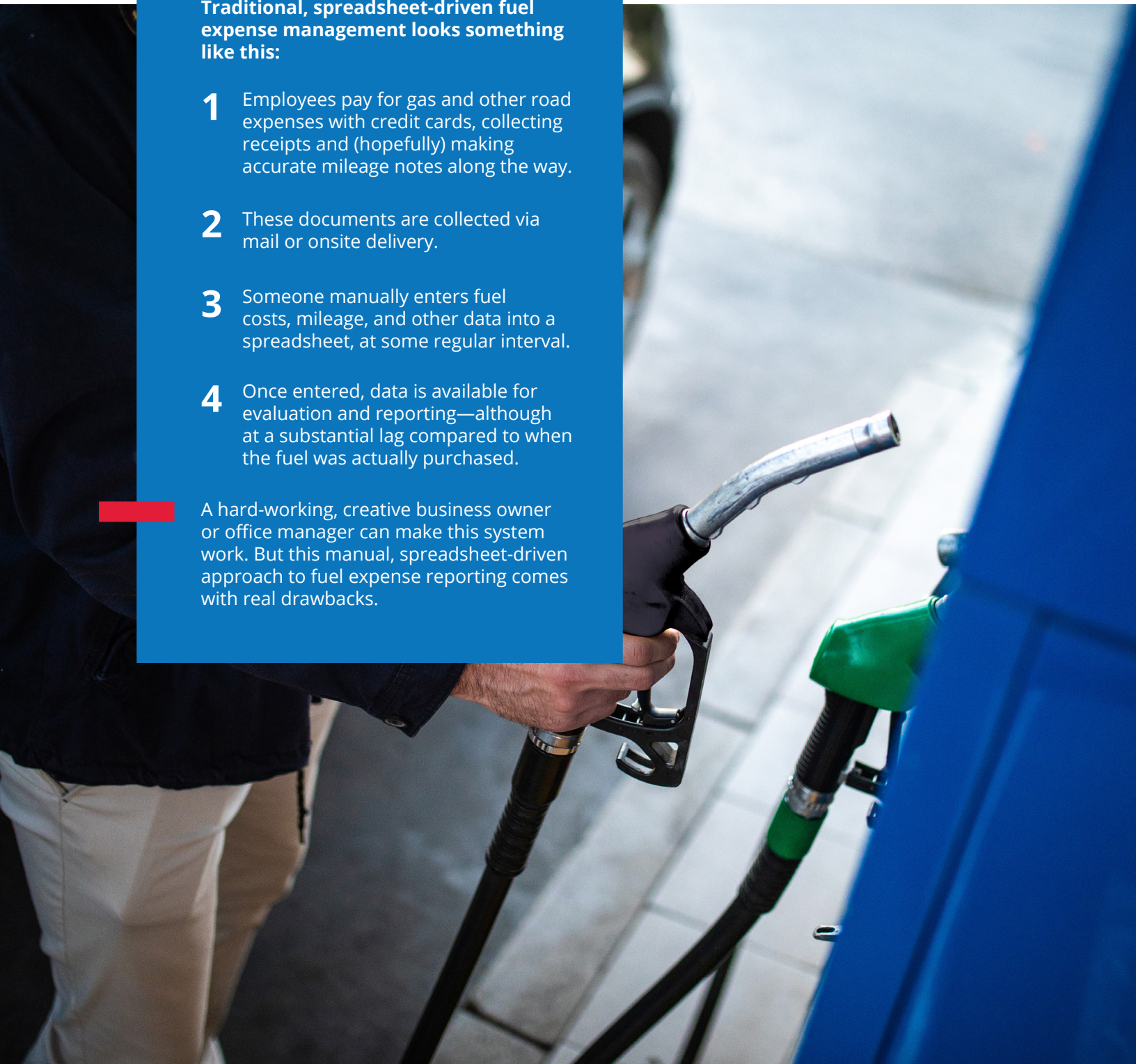
Spreadsheet-based fuel expense management

For businesses with vehicles, fuel expense reporting is a core business workflow. Yet many companies rely on manual, spreadsheet-driven solutions for tracking this vital operational expense.

Traditional, spreadsheet-driven fuel expense management looks something like this:

1 Employees pay for gas and other road expenses with credit cards, collecting receipts and (hopefully) making accurate mileage notes along the way.

2 These documents are collected via mail or onsite delivery.

3 Someone manually enters fuel costs, mileage, and other data into a spreadsheet, at some regular interval.

4 Once entered, data is available for evaluation and reporting—although at a substantial lag compared to when the fuel was actually purchased.

A hard-working, creative business owner or office manager can make this system work. But this manual, spreadsheet-driven approach to fuel expense reporting comes with real drawbacks.

The problem with spreadsheets

Human Error = Unreliable Data

Spreadsheets that rely on manual data entry will always have more issues with data accuracy. Human error is a business reality. A single mistyped number can cause key reporting data to be inaccurate.

Spreadsheets Can't Respond in Real-Time

Spreadsheets simply aren't designed as a real-time monitoring tool. Periodically entering driver-recorded fuel expense data into a spreadsheet may be suitable for record-keeping, but it won't help with detecting time-sensitive issues, like theft or fraud. By the time you realize there's a problem, it's too late.

Data Entry Doesn't Help Grow Your Business

Spreadsheet tracking can cost business owners serious amounts of time. When you're running a business, there are always new challenges waiting for your attention. The last thing you want to do is spend hours entering data and squinting at faded gas station receipts.

The Spreadsheet Knowledge Barrier

Not everyone knows how to use spreadsheet software, and even proficient users can find it slow and cumbersome. Spreadsheets are versatile, but they aren't purpose-built for fuel expense management. A subtle mistake in a single formula risks throwing off business-critical calculations.

Falling Behind Can Create Reporting Gaps

Given the cumbersome nature of a spreadsheet-driven fuel tracking system, it's easy to fall behind—which means costly issues can linger even longer. Meanwhile, reporting gaps develop, creating opportunity for misuse and slippage.

Spreadsheets Aren't a True Fuel Reporting Tool

In addition to requiring labor-intensive data input, spreadsheets don't provide much assistance with creating key reporting documents. Turning the data back into usable outputs for financial reporting or analysis requires yet more work.

Using a spreadsheet to track fuel expenses can work.

But there are more efficient tools.

Business fuel cards: Field-ready tools for automated fuel expense management

Automated fuel tracking is a powerful alternative to traditional spreadsheet-based methods. It isn't just more efficient, though it certainly saves time. These automated capabilities can help create opportunities for improved expense management.

Crucially, automated fuel expense management doesn't have to be complex or disruptive to implement. Your business can switch quickly and easily with the help of a business fuel card.

A business fuel card is a special payment system specifically designed to provide automated fuel expense management without sacrificing quick, convenient payment for employees.

In some cases, business fuel cards can let employees pay for expenses like repairs and maintenance in addition to fuel.

Business fuel cards can also empower you to monitor fuel expense in real-time—all while doing away with a cumbersome manual workflow.

An effective business fuel card can:

- Directly address the problems associated with spreadsheet-based fuel expense tracking.

- Open up new opportunities for more precise, informative, and actionable fuel expense intelligence.

Why business fuel cards are ready for business

Before we dive deeper into the benefits of business fuel cards, it's important to note one important underlying fact: business fuel cards are a highly flexible and scalable technology.

Whether you're a small business operating a small number of local vehicles or a corporation managing a substantial fleet, business fuel cards can match the situation at hand. Opening a new branch or integrating a new acquisition can create huge reporting headaches for a spreadsheet-based process. But not with a fuel card—simply add new drivers to your account and order new cards.

For larger organizations, automated fuel tracking is a virtual necessity as the business grows. Receipt collection and manual data entry will only become more cumbersome.

For small businesses, fuel cards may be even more important. They're a cost-effective way to access features that let you operate just as efficiently as an enterprise-scale fleet.

No more spreadsheets. No more data entry.

1. Automated tracking means more accurate data.
2. Respond to thefts, anomalous expenditures, and lost cards in real-time.
3. Stop spending valuable time entering fuel data into a spreadsheet.
4. Automatically generate key documentation.

The benefits of a business fuel card

You can easily check the purchase activity of any specific card. And all without chasing drivers for receipts, compiling expense reports, or keying in data.

Driver details are easy to access, in a single interface. Instead of matching names to card numbers, you can instantly see the purchasing activity of each employee. You can track more granular expense data. For example, sales tax, fuel-grade, and miles per gallon.

Turn reporting into a strategic tool. Beyond purchase activity reports, you can run reports for financial summaries, site summaries, tax exemptions, and even your own custom reports.

Drill down more precisely. It's easy to zero in on specific employees, vehicles, or time periods. Business fuel cards help put the data you need at your fingertips.

Mobile account access. Even when you're out of the office, you can receive alerts and manage your fuel card account with a mobile app.

An effective business fuel card provider can take you through each step of the process needed to implement a business fuel card system. With the right plan, it's possible to transition to a card system within 30 days of your original application.

Not all business fuel cards are created equal. It's important to make sure any card you're considering can deliver on the benefits discussed above.

Next, we take a look at questions that will help ensure you select the right business fuel card provider for your business.

Pro tips: What to ask about a business fuel card solution before applying

How difficult are fuel cards to implement? What resources are available to help me with this process?

Change can be hard. Implementing a fuel card doesn't have to be. You'll need to gather some key information about drivers, issue them their new cards, and ensure procedures are in place for how they will be used.

A quality card provider will offer resources to help with implementation, including a step-by-step guide to implementing the card, support to staff to assist you when needed, and help monitoring the activation of your new cards.

What can drivers buy with their business fuel cards?

The most versatile business fuel cards only allow drivers to purchase fuel, as well as maintenance services, and even convenience store products. In fact, you'll be able to determine precisely what can be bought with each individual card.

What kind of limits can I set with the card?

Precise, customizable limits help control spending and reduce the risk of fraud or misuse. Your card should allow for customizable controls--like shutting the card off after business hours, or after a specified spending limit is reached.

Does the card require both a Driver ID number and odometer reading at the pump?

This will ensure that the right data is collected for each purchase, to maximize the analytical value of your business fuel card.

What happens if one of my drivers leaves the company? How do I on-board new drivers?

Ideally, your fuel card provider will offer a single interface where you can easily track, activate, deactivate, and monitor cards. If you hire a new driver, onboarding them with a fuel card can be done quickly.

Are business fuel cards hard for employees to learn how to use?

The most effective business fuel cards only require a few simple steps at the pump. For example, an employee may have to enter a Driver ID number and current odometer reading for each purchase (for security and reporting purposes).

Chevron and Texaco Business Cards help make business fuel expense management easier

Chevron and Texaco Business Cards offer a comprehensive solution for automated fuel expense reporting. Our cards not only help track and report fuel spending data but come with tools to help you maximize the value of this operational insight.

Beyond expense reporting

As you may have noticed the features above certainly help record and analyze fuel expenses. But, unlike a spreadsheet, that's only a small part of the overall value a quality fuel card brings to the table.

A Chevron and Texaco Business Card Program is an easy-to-use system that comes with a true toolkit to help you better manage your fuel spend.

We go far beyond *recording* fuel usage. We provide not only the data, but the business tools needed to help you get a birds-eye view of expenditures and generate actionable insights into tangible savings opportunities.

The power of Level 3 data

Different levels of data granularity can help illustrate how much deeper Chevron and Texaco Business Card's reporting capabilities go compared to a standard credit card. With a standard credit card, even if you do manage to reliably collect receipts from your drivers, it will nearly always be limited to one of the first two tiers below.

Level I data
Bare-bones info like date of purchase, vendor, and amount spent. Typically seen in a consumer credit card statement.

Level 2 data
Adds key details like vendor type, fuel grade, and sales tax. Some business credit cards offer this level of insight.

Level 3 data
Driver ID-specific data on who purchased what, when, and with which card. Business fuel cards can provide deeper operational data points like odometer reading, product categories purchased, and cost per mile.

The Chevron and Texaco Business Card Program

A powerful tool for optimizing your fueling operations

Road-ready tools

With the easy-to-use Fleet SmartHub app, you won't have to spend a lot of time deciphering new technology. You can manage bills, credit and payments wherever you are, 24-7, so you can get back to business

Actionable insights

With your Chevron and Texaco Business Card, you won't just be presented with reams of raw data to wade through. We synthesize fuel consumption data into compelling reports that make it easier to understand spending patterns, spot problems, and develop new insights.

Proactive misuse prevention

From flagging higher-priced fuel grade purchasing, to identifying irregular fuel purchases that don't match recorded mileage, our platform helps you identify wasteful spending.

Service and support

Our U.S.-based support team is ready to help, 24/7. We understand that businesses depend on their fuel card to keep running, and we're there at any time to help you get more value from your program.

Unprecedented control

Rather than track fuel spending after the fact, you can actually take control of it with active monitoring, the ability to set spending limits, and visibility into whether drivers are following your spending policy. Cards can even be limited by time of day, product type, and more.

Security and verification

Every transaction will require a Driver ID number entered at the pump. This provides an added layer of protection against fraudulent purchases.

No more busywork

The Chevron and Texaco Business Card Program uses your automatically recorded data to provide key documentation, like purchase activity reports, transaction summaries, tax exemption reports, and more. Accounting departments or business owners shouldn't need to spend weeks or months untangling individual receipts or manually verifying drivers' purchases against their card names. Reporting data can be easily merged into most existing electronic procurement systems.

Premium GPS vehicle tracking (optional)

GPS tracking, a premium upgrade available for your Chevron and Texaco Business Card account, takes reporting to a higher level of granularity. You can track vehicles in real-time, identify issues like speeding and excessive idling, and help improve driver safety and performance. You'll even be able to tell how much time vehicles spent at a job site or fueling station. With this upgrade, your fuel card functions as a foundation for a true vehicle-analysis suite.

Full GPS tracking includes vehicle fault codes to help preemptively diagnose engine problems, braking data (reduce wear and tear), and more. You'll even be able to tell which drivers are taking the time to select the cheapest fuel option available.

Make an investment in better fuel management

If you've been considering moving toward automated fuel expense management, now may be the right time to act.

With the Chevron and Texaco Business Card Program, you'll experience a streamlined implementation process towards a quality business fuel card system that can deliver the operational benefits discussed in this article.

We recommend evaluating your business to see if there's any compelling reason to wait. With your Chevron and Texaco Business Card Program provider there to help with the transition, you may be surprised at how soon you'll be up and running.

If there's no compelling reason preventing the move to a business card, taking action now will maximize the value of your new solution. You want your new tools in place and ready to help prevent fraud, optimize spending habits, and help drivers perform more efficiently.