



# CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR USES MAINTENANCE ALERTS TO EXPAND VEHICLE LIFETIMES

Custom Underground improves efficiency and savings through Asset Tracking and Fleet Management

## Customer Profile



### BUSINESS TYPE:

With 50 employees, Custom Underground is a utility construction contractor in the communications sector that specializes in fiber optic infrastructure, telephone cable construction and maintenance.

### LOCATION:

Headquartered in Edwards, Illinois, it serves central and northern Illinois plus a four-state area.

### CHALLENGES:

- No formal tracking technology
- Manually located assets or hoped they were still in a certain location

### SOLUTION:

- GPS Trackit, powered by UScellular®
- 47 **asset tracking** and **fleet management** units
- Maintenance alerts

### RESULTS SINCE LAUNCH:

- Saving \$22,000 per year on cell phone plan
- Possible savings of as much as \$75,000 on prevention of lost assets
- Future savings on insurance premiums

Think back to 30 or so years when field technicians had to travel to pay phones to order a concrete truck or contact the office. Beau Feuchter, VP Operations for Custom Underground Inc., recalls their pre-GPS Trackit days as similarly inefficient. They lacked tracking technology and relied on trust and phone check-ins to manage field operations

“We weren’t doing much of anything in terms of tracking before. It was kind of just you trust your people where they are and what they’re doing through boots on the ground management and cell phone check-ins. Other than that, it was kind of like everybody goes off on the day on their own and you hope that they’re producing for you,” Feuchter said.

Switching from another major carrier to UScellular offered significant savings on their cell phone plan, approximately \$22,000 annually. This financial flexibility gave them the funds to explore GPS tracking options for their high-value equipment.

“Our UScellular rep came to the table offering us cheaper rates than what we had with our former provider. We had significant savings on our monthly and annual cell phone and that allowed us to expand,” Feuchter said about GPS Trackit, the solution they implemented last year.

One day, their dedicated UScellular rep was at their yard where they house equipment and asked, “how do you keep track of all this stuff. Where’s everything at?”

That started a discussion that led to Custom Underground moving from a manual, trusting environment to new technology that makes them more efficient.

### ***Keeping Track of Valuable Assets***

Custom Underground now uses GPS Trackit, powered by UScellular, to track assets and provide maintenance alerts.

First, they deployed discreet, easy-to-install asset trackers to pinpoint the location of trailers, excavators and other valuable equipment. These devices automatically log asset locations twice daily, deterring theft and providing peace of mind.

“I’ll go in every couple days to see where’s that trailer at, or where’s that excavator? I can see it was last pinged ‘over here’, which seems good. Then I look at the map for anything that seems odd. Like, ‘what’s that thing doing 5 hours away’,” he explained.



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— **Beau Feuchter**,  
VP Operations, Custom  
Underground Inc.



*Custom Underground fleet prepares to install fiber optic cable in a residential neighborhood.*



*Custom Underground employee operates horizontal directional drilling equipment during fiber optic installation.*

“I really like the software and devices. I think it’s improved our overall organization and management of our assets. Certainly, on the maintenance side, we’re more efficient and even just that type of monitoring and scheduling has allowed us to save money.”

— **Beau Feuchter**

A couple of years ago, Custom Underground suffered a significant loss when \$75,000 worth of equipment was stolen. Despite filing a police report and taking all the necessary steps, the equipment was never recovered. “Once it’s gone, it’s basically gone. Even law enforcement will tell you there’s a low chance of getting a mini excavator back or a real trailer or something,” he said

So, after a few items were stolen, he realized how nice it would be able to receive movement alerts and find out where they are located in real time.

“It gives us a set of eyes that we never really had in the field,” added Diane Feuchter, Custom Underground president.

### ***Maintenance-First Priority***

Beau Feuchter said their primary goal for GPS Trackit is proactive maintenance, though. The company has more than a dozen trucks and they use the technology to set alerts—i.e. 2,000 miles to the next service. “I check once a week in the system to see where things are. It allows us to be more timely and organized with our oil changes and services—the routine stuff,” he said.

“I’ve now caught instances where a vehicle was past due. Without GPS Trackit, it would have been still going down the road. No one would have known. So, it’s allowed me to find some of the trucks that have fallen through the cracks.

“Just by being able to go into the database, I can see real-time data, as opposed to just reminding guys every so often: ‘this is when we change those trucks’, and then it never happens or a truck switches drivers over the course of a month and maintenance gets overlooked,” he said, adding that planning prevents disrupting workflows.

Feuchter knows they have yet to explore the full potential of the software, which includes features like monitoring driver behavior and alerts for hard braking, turning and speeding, which they may utilize in the future

“This being relatively new for us, we’re using some of the more basic functions of just again identifying locations of things, where they are, and the maintenance,” he said, adding that GPS Trackit software keeps him organized too.

“I can pull up the application and have a list of everything, and most of it’s got real-time data as far as mileage and usage. And it feels way more organized.”



Diane added: “We’re learning about tools in the system that we didn’t know about when we first signed on. We thought it was just about tracking, but there’s so much more information that we’re gathering. One of the best things is just being able to monitor behavior and the location of your fleet,” she said.

### **Positive Results**

Feuchter and his team enjoy the new ability to quickly locate equipment, and the associated time and fuel savings. Plus, the company can prove that vehicles and assets were on the job at certain times in order to corroborate billing and reduce disputes.

“We have situations where we need to verify locations and timings, whether it be for behavior or for invoicing purposes on a time and material job. And it’s another way to corroborate and time stamp movements throughout the day,” he said. Furthermore, he believes that with timely maintenance, they may be able to get another year to year and a half out of each vehicle.

In addition, Diane noted that she appreciates their new ability to better track people and equipment with GPS Trackit. “It’s very comprehensive and we’re still learning everything that’s on it. For instance, our CFO just found out that GPS Trackit shows us when gas is taken out of a vehicle. That’s big red flag, so there’s an alert and we had no idea,” Diane said.

Overall, Beau Feuchter said “It’s working great. I really like the software and devices. I think it’s improved our overall organization and management of our assets. Certainly, on the maintenance side, we’re more efficient and even just that type of monitoring and scheduling has allowed us to save money.

“We do a lot of rural work, and we travel all over the state, so it’s nice to be able to pull up the map and look at a job and make sure there’s nothing left behind. Sometimes we come and go from job sites and a trailer can sit parked somewhere for the duration and it’s a good way to clean up our tracks to make sure that everything made it home.”

His team is so satisfied with GPS Trackit, powered by UScellular, that they have made tracker installation a requirement for all new vehicles and assets added to their fleet. “That’s how happy we are with them that it’s going to be mandatory of new assets going forward,” he said.

And as far as discreet asset trackers, he’ll probably “grab a few more of those just to put on some other things that don’t have them yet.”

Custom Underground may also be able to save on insurance premiums and are in the process of discussing with their provider.



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— **Diane Feuchter**,  
President, Custom  
Underground Inc.





### ***Why UScellular®***

Feuchter cites two main reasons why he chose UScellular for his cellular service and GPS tracking. The first is his local sales rep, whom he credits with providing them a better price and then bringing them a better way to track their assets.

“Our rep has always serviced us really well and been available, and that’s something we hadn’t experienced before with other companies. So yeah, he’s been the key,” Diane added.

“The second reason would be service in terms of just availability from a customer rep and interaction point of view,” Beau said. “We just feel a bit more taken care of and that’s a big thing too. With our last provider, a lot of things went unanswered, and it felt like we’d be on our own. We were looking for better representation and we got that with UScellular,” he said.

To learn more about UScellular Asset Tracking Solutions visit [our website](#).

