

SUCCESS STORY

Tata AutoComp Hendrickson Suspensions' ULTIMAAX®, the ultimate choice for tippers

The ULTIMAAX® suspension that Tata Motors launched at EXCON 2017 in its heavy-duty tipper has resulted in many a happy customer. This gratification factor, be it in higher returns, minimum maintenance and zero suspension failure, has been the result of untiring hard work of the teams from Tata AutoComp Hendrickson Suspensions (THSL) for more than three and a half years to thoroughly validate and get the product market-ready. **Rajesh Rajgor** visited a few fleet owners in Pune to obtain first-hand feedback on the product and its impact on their business



One of the most critical vehicles that help drive the infrastructure industry is the tipper. It is critical for two basic reasons: a) different loading requirements and b) multi-application usage. It is observed that OEMs may have designed the tipper for a particular use and the operator may be using it a little too harshly in the absence of adequate application knowledge. In that sense, this brings on further challenges, right from working

out the right configuration for the drive axle suspension to providing accurate articulation that doesn't compromise on torque.

Hence, when THSL utilised its extensive knowledge of local operations, it zeroed down on bringing the ULTIMAAX® suspension, a proven product in the US and China. Based on the feedback from tipper operators using traditional as well as bogie suspensions, the team zeroed in on a product that provides

SUCCESS STORY



Jagdish Kadam, Chairman and Managing Director, Raj Path InfraCon

outstanding stability, driver comfort and equipment protection since the existing suspension needs to have a greater number of leaves and an anti-roll bar, as per the Indian road conditions. These additions not only increase the weight of the existing rear suspension but also increase its stiffness. The higher stiffness in suspension in turn increases vehicle vibration during unloaded running.

Higher Uptime

We spoke to two operators, namely, Raj Path InfraCon (P) Ltd. (RPIPL) and R S Kamthe Infrastructure Developers (P) Ltd. (RSK) that have been using tippers with ULTIMAAX® – the advanced severe duty rubber suspension – in Pune, Maharashtra. Jagdish Kadam, Chairman and Managing Director, RPIPL, said, “After achieving fantastic results in terms of comfort to drivers, top-notch service from THSL leading to reduced maintenance time and superior durability helping more trips in our initial lot of 15 tippers with ULTIMAAX® suspension, we have placed an order for another 60 tippers. ” One of the leading players in road construction, with over 2,500 employees, RPIPL has been in the infrastructure business for over 30 years. Driven by the CMD’s eternal life mantras of 3Ps, namely, Passion, Patience and Perseverance, the company has garnered appreciation from several government departments.



“We have received a certificate of excellence for our speedy work on National Highway 7 joining Nagpur to Hyderabad which we got a contract for in 2016. We completed the project in two years. Earlier, the contract was allocated to different companies twice in 2006 and 2011 but the work remained incomplete,” informs Kadam. RPIPL recognised the importance of having their own fleet early on and hence have a total of 350 construction machineries out of which around 151 are tippers. “We boast of vehicles from the stables of Tata Motors (around 90), Ashok Leyland (around 30) and MAN Truck and Bus (around 31). The 60 new vehicles from Tata Motors, fitted with ULTIMAAX®, will take the overall count to 211 vehicles, thus helping us to take on new projects with maximum uptime and clock a turnover of approximately Rs 500 crore,” he adds.



**Mahesh Deshmukh,
Stores & Vehicle Incharge, Raj Path InfraCon**

As for the company’s approach to managing maximum uptime, specifically in the tippers that run 50% of the time in unloaded condition with chances of increase in vibration when empty leading to poor ride quality and reduced life of the chassis-mounted vehicle parts, Kadam states, “In the rubber suspension design, suspension stiffness is made variable to get low suspension stiffness at unloaded times and get good ride quality and high stiffness at when loaded to get good stability. With the steel leaf springs replaced by rubber springs, the ULTIMAAX® not only reduces

SUCCESS STORY



The company that has been using tippers with traditional four springs linked to an equalizer bar, has recently in the last decade moved to higher bogie suspension tippers with torque rods for axle placement at the bottom and A-frame or straight torque rods at the top. While RSK continues to use the bogie suspension system, which according to them is useful to carry heavy loads as compared to the four-spring system despite knowing that it is relatively heavier, shifted to rubber suspensions recently. "We have recently purchased 10 tippers from Tata Motors with ULTIMAAX® rubber suspensions. What we have observed is that these are of really good quality and have not faced any breakages. In fact, the overall torture track feedback is encouraging. However, we believe that the height might cause some problem on uneven harsh track and hence are cautious while unloading material from a tipper," Kamthe states.

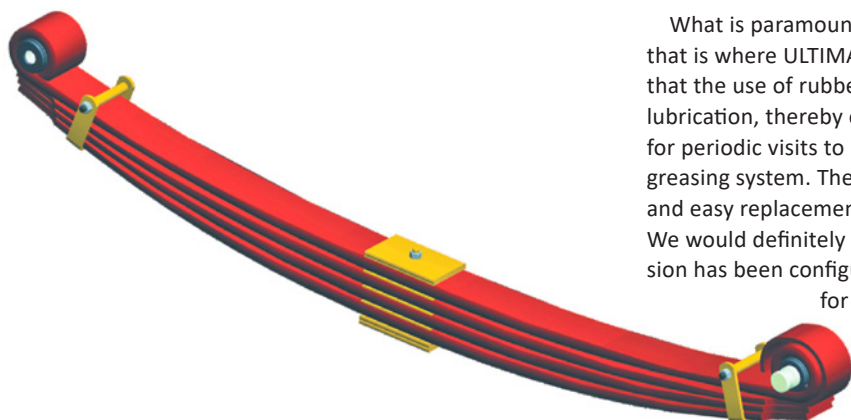
weight but improves ride quality, safety and durability."

Zero Maintenance

R S Kamthe Infrastructure Developers, which started as a tunnel sand blasting company in the late eighties, is now engaged in road construction and land development for companies in and around Maharashtra since the past nine years. Mahesh Kamthe, Director, RSK, is a firm believer in the strength of machines and people, developing 15-20 projects across Maharashtra with up to 200 people per site. "We have approximately 110 tippers out of which 75-80 are from Tata Motors and balance from Ashok Leyland, helping us to clock a turnover of Rs 110 crores."



What is paramount for an operator is the serviceability and that is where ULTIMAAX® scores. Says Kamthe: "We believe that the use of rubber eliminates the need for periodic lubrication, thereby ensuring total peace of mind and no need for periodic visits to a workshop or using expensive chassis greasing system. The unique design provides long service life and easy replacement of rubber springs to reduce downtime. We would definitely go for more". The ULTIMAAX® suspension has been configured for heavy-duty mining applications for both 6 × 4 and 8 × 4 tippers after vigorous tests and trials. It has now proven to be a huge money saver for Indian tipper operators in the road and infrastructure space. ♦



KT Telematics launches 'Inventory Tracker' app to optimize inventory levels



KT Telematics, leading fleet management solutions provider, has launched an Inventory Tracker app to help fleets monitor the consumption of spares and optimize inventory costs. The timing of the app launch augurs well with the current situation in the CV industry with all stakeholders including fleet operators grappling to handle the crisis due to the COVID pandemic.

Commenting on the app launch, Thiagarajan, Founder, KT Telematics, says: "In the current situation, fleets cannot make money; they need to cut expenses, reduce inventory and streamline purchases. Having a streamlined visibility of their cash and inventory matters a lot. Our Inventory Tracker app would help fleets reduce part costs, raise purchase orders, streamline stock count and purchase process flow, also enable direct interaction with vendors."

It is a common practice for large fleet owners, with 50+ vehicles, to buy spares such as tubes & flaps, nuts & bolts, oils, bushes, greases, etc. in large quantities. So, instead of buying 5 kg grease, they go for a 100 kg barrel which turns out much cheaper and also fetches them credit options from the vendor.

But not everything is beneficial in such an approach, as Thiagarajan explains: "Due to large availability of spares, the efficiency of spares usage is usually low and largely goes untracked. There tends to be a lot of wastage which leads to additional expenses. Also, there might be more stock than actually needed which might go unused for a long time. All the unused stock lying idle at a large fleet operator's storeroom could account for lakhs of capital lying which is significant for any business."

At times, fleet operators end up having to stock thousands of different parts of varying value, as a result of which managing

the inventory could become a nightmare. This is where having a proper inventory management system makes a big difference. In addition, an optimized inventory would also help improve the fleet's vehicle utilization. If the planning and purchase of spares are done more efficiently, the waiting time of vehicles due to the unavailability of spares can be reduced and even eliminated. Fleet operators can plan on a monthly or quarterly basis and buy spares accordingly to ensure they neither fall short of what is needed and end up losing valuable uptime nor buy in excess and lock up capital in stock.

KT Telematics already offers a Service Tracker app that is used by service personnel while consuming the spares. The new Inventory Tracker app has been linked to the Service Tracker app to offer a more complete solution wherein the entire life cycle of all the spares is monitored from purchase to scrape sales.

Apart from having spares at different service locations, fleets also tend to carry spares in the vehicles for quick fixes. Touching upon this aspect, Thiagarajan shares: "In a fleet, every truck is kind of a location in itself. Every truck has some spares like tubes & flaps, nuts & bolts, greases, etc. for usage during the trip. So, a fleet of 100 vehicles means there are 100 vehicle locations carrying spares apart from the stationary service locations. Our app monitors the spares consumption in the vehicles as well which would help fleets track how much spares are consumed by each vehicle and optimize the same."

The KT Telematics team has worked overtime during the lockdown to launch the Inventory Tracker app ahead of schedule so as to support fleets in the tough times. With the app available on the Android Play Store and iOS App Store, the company is currently creating awareness about the same among fleets. ♦