

POOL ROUTE PROFITABILITY GAP

# IN OUR COST MODEL, EACH EXTRA MILE BETWEEN STOPS COSTS ABOUT $7 PER POOL A MONTH.

A cost model of a one-tech weekly route in Florida, built from federal wage, fuel and vehicle data and 41 live route listings, October 2026.

THE FINDING

# SAME $144 PRICE, SAME TECH: STOPS 1 MILE APART KEEP ABOUT $2,000 A MONTH. STOPS 6 MILES APART KEEP ABOUT $26.

A model, not a survey: one tech, 5 paid 8-hour stop days a week, Florida wages (BLS), gas (EIA), truck costs (AAA) and the price advertised in 41 Florida route listings. Profit is before the owner's pay; section 02 lists every input.

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**$6.51**
each extra mile between stops, per account a month

**$3.98**
of it: paid drive time that pushes stops out

**$1.43**
of it: gas and wear, cash on every mile

**$1.10**
of it: truck, insurance and software over fewer accounts

CONTENTS


01 Key findings 3

02 Method: one truck, one tech, one week of stops 3

03 Sample and coverage 5

04 Spreading stops from 1 to 6 miles apart wipes out 99% of a route's profit 6

05 Paid drive time, not gas, is most of what a mile costs 7

06 Wages and stop time move profit more than gas 8

07 Limitations 9

08 What an owner can do with this 10

09 Sources 11

10 About this research 12

# 01 KEY FINDINGS

**1** **Spacing between stops can erase almost all of a route's profit.**

With every other input fixed, moving from stops 1 mile apart to 6 miles apart cuts monthly profit per tech from $2,041 to $26, a gap of $2,016 (99%). That costs as much profit as cutting your price by about $33 per account.

**2** **Each extra mile between stops costs about $6.51 per account per month.**

$3.98 is paid drive time: it pushes stops out of the day, so the same payroll is spread over fewer accounts. $1.43 is gas and wear, paid in cash on every mile. $1.10 is the truck, insurance and software spread over fewer accounts.

**3** **The break-even price rises from $111 to $143.**

On a dense route the tech covers every cost at $111 a month per pool; on a sparse one the same work needs $143 before the owner earns anything.

**4** **Drive time is the hidden payroll.**

At 6 miles between stops, 29% of every stop is spent behind the wheel, against 6% at 1 mile.

**5** **Gas is the smallest lever.**

At the latest weekly Florida price ($4.017 a gallon instead of the 52-week average of $3.530), the full cost of a mile per account rises only from $6.51 to $6.63. Wages and the minutes per stop matter far more.

# 02 METHOD: ONE TRUCK, ONE TECH, ONE WEEK OF STOPS

This is a model, not a measurement of real companies. It follows one full-time technician through a work week and asks one question: what happens to the money when the same kind of pool sits further from the last one?

**Capacity.** The tech is paid 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. On each stop day the drive from home or the shop to the route and back (20 miles) and a buffer of 45 minutes for loading, supply runs, locked gates and problem pools come off the top. Every stop takes the on-site minutes plus the drive from the previous stop (miles ÷ speed). The number of stops that fit in a day, times the days, is the number of weekly accounts the route can hold.

**Money.** Revenue = accounts × monthly price. Costs per month: wages for every paid hour × the employer cost factor; gas = miles ÷ mpg × price; wear = miles × cents per mile; chemicals per visit × 4.33 visits; and fixed costs for the truck, insurance and software. What is left is profit before the owner's own pay.

**Cost of a mile.** The full cost of one extra mile between stops is the rise in break-even price per account per mile between 1 and 6 miles. The model splits it into three parts that add up to the whole: (1) gas and wear per account, paid in cash on every mile; (2) paid drive time, which pushes stops out of the day so the same payroll is spread over fewer accounts; (3) the truck, insurance and software, spread over fewer accounts.

| ASSUMPTION | BASE VALUE | SOURCE OR BASIS | CONFIDENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly price per weekly account | 143.70 $/month | Median monthly service billing per pool as advertised by sellers in 41 active Florida route listings (asking billing; National Pool Route Sales, Oct 30, 2026; see report No. 07). Cross-checks: PoolDial 2026 self-reported Florida median $155 (n = 23); Skimmer Service Rate Index, June 2024, Florida average $128–136. | medium |
| On-site minutes per full-service stop | 30 minutes | PoolDial route capacity planner: most pros average 20–30 minutes per pool; full service with vacuuming and brushing runs 30–45 minutes; its worked example uses 30. SmartService (Jun 2026): 25–35 minutes. Vendor guides; no independent dataset exists. | low |
| Daily buffer on a stop day | 45 minutes/day | PoolDial route capacity planner: plan for 30–60 minutes of buffer time per day (loading, supply runs, locked gates, a problem pool). Midpoint; vendor guide. | low |
| Miles between stops (base route) | 2.0 miles | Model choice. At the base speed, 2 miles is 4 minutes of driving, inside the 3–5 minute 'dense route' band in the PoolDial density guide (Apr 21, 2026). Scenarios run from 0.5 to 8 miles. | assumption |
| Average driving speed between stops | 30 mph | TomTom Traffic Index 2025, city-wide average speeds including highways: Tampa 29.7, Orlando 34.0, Jacksonville 34.7, Miami 21.0 mph. Base rounded to 30; Miami tested as a scenario. | medium |
| Miles per stop day from home or shop to the route and back | 20 miles/day | Model assumption; not published anywhere we could find. Tested in the sensitivity tables. | assumption |
| Paid hours per day | 8 hours | Standard full-time day. | assumption |
| Stop days per week | 5 days | PoolDial: 5 days a week is standard. SmartService describes 4 stop days plus a day for repairs, call-backs and weather makeups; tested as a scenario. | low |
| Technician hourly wage | 20.00 $/hour | Midpoint of the two Florida medians in report No. 06 (BLS OEWS May 2025): landscaping and groundskeeping $17.84, general maintenance and repair $22.15. | medium |

| ASSUMPTION | BASE VALUE | SOURCE OR BASIS | CONFIDENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Employer cost factor on wages | 1.135 × | Computed in model.py (burden_from_parts) at the base wage: FICA 7.65% (IRS Pub. 15, 2026) + FUTA 0.6% after the maximum state credit (IRS Pub. 15, 2026) and Florida reemployment tax 2.7% (floridarevenue.com), both on the first $7,000 and spread over a full year + workers' compensation 5.25% of payroll (midpoint of the $2.50–$8.00 per $100 range 1-800-Insurance quotes for pool service, which it puts under class codes 9402 or 5348; the Florida rate itself is not public). Health insurance and paid leave are excluded. | medium |
| Gasoline price | 3.530 $/gallon | Computed at build time from the EIA spreadsheet: mean of the last 52 weekly Florida regular retail prices up to Oct 26, 2026. The latest week is tested as a scenario. | high |
| Truck fuel economy | 19 mpg | Lowest EPA combined rating of the 2026 Ford F-150 2WD gasoline versions (19–21 mpg, fueleconomy.gov), as a stand-in for a loaded truck in stop-and-go driving. | medium |
| Maintenance, repairs and tires | 0.1136 $/mile | AAA Your Driving Costs 2025, half-ton crew-cab pickup: 11.36 cents per mile. AAA models a new vehicle in personal use, not a work truck. | medium |
| Truck ownership: depreciation, insurance, finance | 866.83 $/month | AAA Your Driving Costs 2025, half-ton crew-cab pickup: $10,402 a year at 15,000 miles (depreciation $6,041, insurance $1,699, finance $1,565, plus license and fees), ÷ 12. | medium |
| General liability insurance | 95.25 $/month | Insureon median for pool cleaning businesses, $1,143 a year (updated Sep 3, 2026). | medium |
| Route software | 118.00 $/month | Median monthly-billed list price for one tech and 59 weekly accounts across 7 U.S. route software products with public prices (range $99.99 to $199), captured Oct 30, 2026 (Ruberio Research No. 10). | medium |
| Chemicals per weekly visit | 6.00 $/visit | PoolDial chemical-margin calculator (2026): 'expect $4-8 per visit in chemicals'. Cross-check: about 2 gallons of 12.5% liquid chlorine a week at Florida pro prices of $1.78–$2.00 a gallon is $3.56–$4.00; if chlorine is about 45% of chemical cost (PoolDial pricing guide), the total is about $8–9 a visit. $9 is tested as a scenario. | low |

## 03 SAMPLE AND COVERAGE

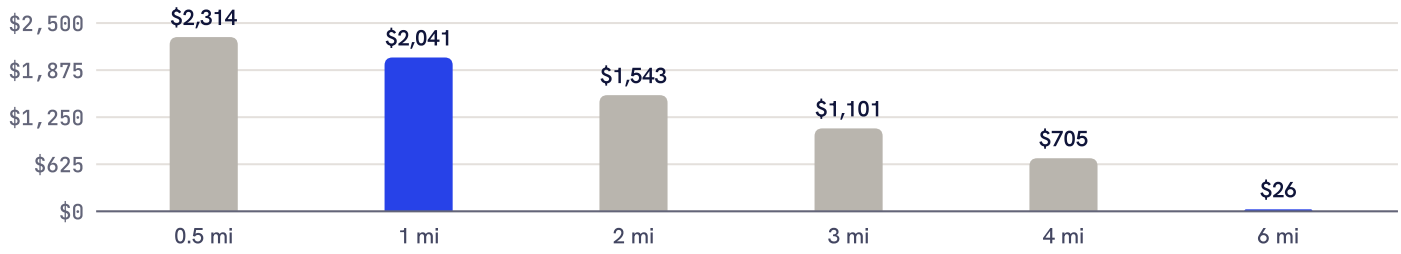
- **Federal data** (high confidence): BLS OEWS May 2025 wages (via report No. 06), EIA weekly Florida gasoline prices (52 weeks to Oct 26, 2026), IRS payroll tax rates, Florida reemployment tax, fueleconomy.gov. AAA vehicle costs (medium: AAA models a new vehicle in personal use).
- **Market data** (medium): the monthly price is the median billing per pool as advertised by sellers in 41 active Florida route listings on Oct 30, 2026 (asking billing; report No. 07). Self-reported surveys and a 2024 software index put the Florida rate between $128 and $155.

- **Route operations** (low): minutes per stop, the daily buffer and stops per day come from software vendors' guides, not independent surveys. No public dataset of real pool routes exists. That is why the report shows every result as a range across densities and runs the key inputs through sensitivity tables.
- **Check against the vendor ranges.** The base route (2 miles between stops) lands at 11.6 stops a day and 58 weekly accounts per tech; across the densities tested it holds 43 to 64. Vendor guides put a full-service tech at 10–12 stops a day (SmartService; PoolDial says 10–14) and 40–65 weekly pools (SmartService: 40–48 on four stop days; PoolDial: about 60–65 on five).
- **Not in the model:** repairs and equipment sales (often a large share of profit), callbacks, weather days, seasonality, the owner's own time, office staff, marketing, and customer churn.

## 04 SPREADING STOPS FROM 1 TO 6 MILES APART WIPES OUT 99% OF A ROUTE'S PROFIT

A dense route does two things at once: it cuts the cash cost of every visit (gas and wear, $1.43 of each extra mile's $6.51), and it lets the same paid day hold more pools (paid drive time plus the truck, insurance and software, $5.08). In this model the second effect is about 3.6 times the first. Going from 1 to 6 miles apart costs 15 accounts of capacity per tech.

**Monthly profit per one-tech route falls by about $403 for each extra mile between stops**



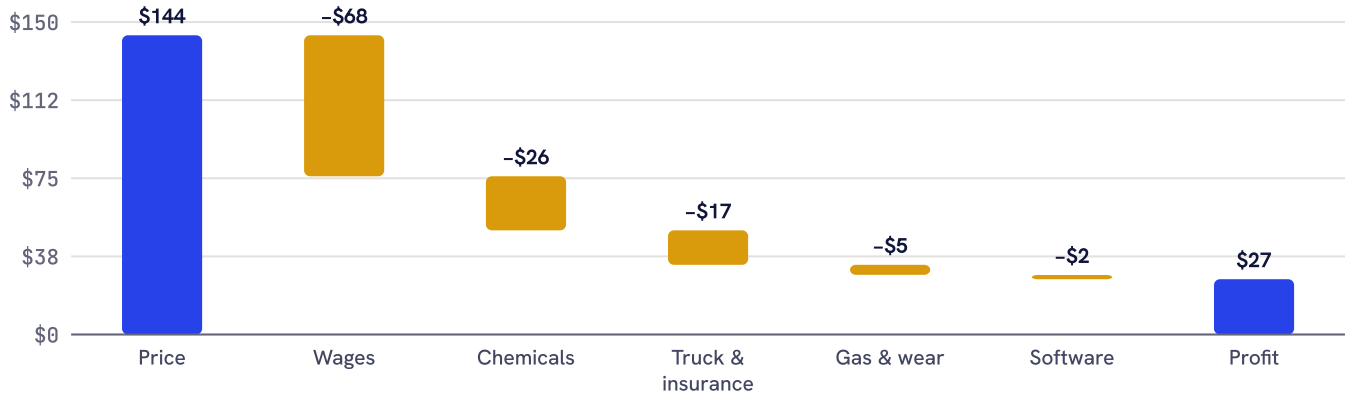

Profit before the owner's pay, at $143.70 per account; only the miles between stops change. At 8 miles the route loses $535 a month (table).

Source: Ruberio route model (October 2026); inputs in section 02.

| MILES APART | DRIVE MIN | STOPS / DAY | ACCOUNTS | REVENUE | PROFIT | MARGIN | BREAK-EVEN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.5 | 1 | 12.7 | 64 | $9,155 | $2,314 | 25% | $107 |
| 1 | 2 | 12.3 | 62 | $8,869 | $2,041 | 23% | $111 |
| 2 | 4 | 11.6 | 58 | $8,347 | $1,543 | 18% | $117 |
| 3 | 6 | 11.0 | 55 | $7,884 | $1,101 | 14% | $124 |
| 4 | 8 | 10.4 | 52 | $7,469 | $705 | 9% | $130 |
| 6 | 12 | 9.4 | 47 | $6,757 | $26 | 0% | $143 |
| 8 | 16 | 8.6 | 43 | $6,170 | -$535 | -9% | $156 |

# 05 PAID DRIVE TIME, NOT GAS, IS MOST OF WHAT A MILE COSTS

### Where $144 goes on the base route (2 miles between stops)




Per account per month. Profit is before the owner's pay.

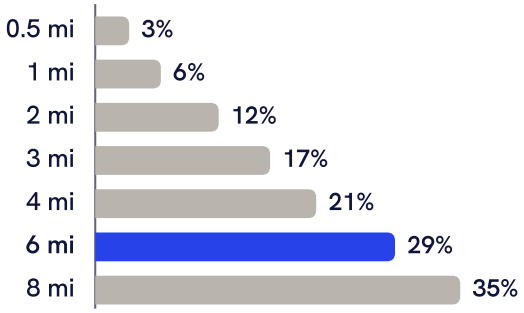
Source: Ruberio route model.

### What one extra mile between stops costs, per account, per month:

| PART | PER ACCOUNT / MONTH | SHARE |
|---|---|---|
| (1) Gas and wear: cash, paid on every mile | $1.43 | 22% |
| (2) Paid drive time: fewer pools per paid day, same payroll | $3.98 | 61% |
| (3) Truck, insurance and software spread over fewer accounts | $1.10 | 17% |
| **Full cost** (rise in break-even price per mile) | **$6.51** | 100% |

Part (2) scales with the wage and with speed. A route that drives through Miami traffic (21 mph) pays $9.07 per extra mile per account instead of $6.51. Part (1) is the only part that rises with the price of gas.

### Share of every stop spent driving




Drive ÷ (drive + 30 on-site minutes), 30 mph.

Source: Ruberio route model.

### Gas matters less than you think

| GAS PRICE | MILE COST / ACCT | PROFIT AT 2 MI |
|---|---|---|
| $3.00 | $6.37 | $1,569 |
| $3.53 | $6.51 | $1,543 |
| $4.02 | $6.63 | $1,519 |
| $5.00 | $6.87 | $1,471 |

# 06 WAGES AND STOP TIME MOVE PROFIT MORE THAN GAS

Each table changes two inputs and keeps the rest at the base case. Read across a row to see the effect of the second input at a given density. Monthly profit per one-tech route, before the owner's pay. On the base route, moving between the two Florida wage medians changes profit by $843 a month, and 25 versus 35 minutes on site by $2,010; gas at $3.00 versus $5.00 a gallon changes it by $99.

**Price per account × density**

| MILES BETWEEN STOPS | $120 / MO | $130 / MO | $144 / MO | $155 / MO | $170 / MO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.5 mi | $804 | $1,442 | $2,314 | $3,034 | $3,990 |
| 1 mi | $579 | $1,196 | $2,041 | $2,739 | $3,665 |
| 2 mi | $167 | $748 | $1,543 | $2,200 | $3,071 |
| 4 mi | -$527 | -$7 | $705 | $1,292 | $2,072 |
| 6 mi | -$1,089 | -$618 | $26 | $557 | $1,262 |
| 8 mi | -$1,553 | -$1,123 | -$535 | -$50 | $594 |

**Tech wage × density (employer cost factor recalculated per wage)**

| MILES BETWEEN STOPS | $17.84 / HR | $20.00 / HR | $22.15 / HR | $25.00 / HR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.5 mi | $2,737 | $2,314 | $1,894 | $1,336 |
| 1 mi | $2,464 | $2,041 | $1,621 | $1,063 |
| 2 mi | $1,966 | $1,543 | $1,123 | $565 |
| 4 mi | $1,127 | $705 | $284 | -$274 |
| 6 mi | $448 | $26 | -$395 | -$953 |
| 8 mi | -$112 | -$535 | -$956 | -$1,514 |

**Minutes on site × density**

| MILES BETWEEN STOPS | 20 MIN ON SITE | 25 MIN ON SITE | 30 MIN ON SITE | 35 MIN ON SITE | 45 MIN ON SITE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.5 mi | $5,865 | $3,748 | $2,314 | $1,279 | -$117 |
| 1 mi | $5,307 | $3,372 | $2,041 | $1,070 | -$252 |
| 2 mi | $4,329 | $2,696 | $1,543 | $686 | -$503 |
| 4 mi | $2,793 | $1,591 | $705 | $25 | -$950 |
| 6 mi | $1,641 | $724 | $26 | -$524 | -$1,334 |
| 8 mi | $745 | $27 | -$535 | -$987 | -$1,668 |

### 8 routes side by side

| SCENARIO | STOPS / DAY | ACCOUNTS | REVENUE / MO | PROFIT / MO | PROFIT / ACCOUNT | BREAK-EVEN PRICE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tight suburban route | 12.3 | 62 | $8,869 | $2,041 | $33.07 | $111 |
| Base case | 11.6 | 58 | $8,347 | $1,543 | $26.57 | $117 |
| Spread-out route | 9.4 | 47 | $6,757 | $26 | $0.55 | $143 |
| Miami traffic (21 mph) | 10.6 | 53 | $7,602 | $946 | $17.89 | $126 |
| 20-minute stops | 16.5 | 82 | $11,825 | $4,329 | $52.61 | $91 |
| 4 stop-days + admin day | 11.6 | 46 | $6,678 | $232 | $4.99 | $139 |
| Chemicals at $9 a visit | 11.6 | 58 | $8,347 | $788 | $13.57 | $130 |
| Gas at $4.02 | 11.6 | 58 | $8,347 | $1,519 | $26.16 | $118 |

Two rows deserve a second look. A week of four stop days plus a paid day for repairs and call-backs holds 46 accounts instead of 58 and keeps $232 a month; on that schedule the repair day has to earn its own money. And chemicals at $9 a visit, the level our chlorine cross-check points to, take profit from $1,543 to $788.

Wages: $17.84 and $22.15 are the Florida BLS medians for landscaping and for general maintenance and repair workers (report No. 06); $20.00 is the base. Prices: $130 and $155 bracket the published Florida estimates. On-site minutes: PoolDial puts most pools at 20–30 minutes and full service with vacuuming and brushing at 30–45.

## 07 LIMITATIONS

- **It is a model.** The route operating inputs (minutes per stop, the daily buffer, stops per day) come from software vendors' guides, not from an independent survey of real routes. They are labeled low confidence in the assumptions table.
- **Even spacing.** Real routes are clusters with a few long hops. The model uses an average distance; two routes with the same average can differ.
- **Speeds are city-wide averages.** TomTom's figures cover all driving in a city, highways included. Residential streets between pools are slower per mile but less congested; the Miami scenario shows what a slower average does.
- **Paid day, not paid stop.** The tech is paid for the full day. Owners who pay per pool move part of the drive cost onto the tech; the route still carries it through turnover and pay rates.
- **Weekly service revenue only.** Repairs, equipment and filter cleans are not modeled. On many routes they are where the margin is, and a dense route also makes those calls cheaper.
- **Lost capacity is only a cost if you could fill it.** Parts (2) and (3) of the cost of a mile assume the tech's day is the limit and there are pools to fill the freed time. If a route is short of customers anyway, only part (1), gas and wear at $1.43 per extra mile per account, is a cash cost.

- **Chemicals** use the vendor estimate of $6 a visit; our chlorine cross-check points to about $8–9 (section 05).
- **Vehicle costs** come from AAA, which models a new vehicle in personal use, not a work truck.
- **Workers' compensation** uses the range one broker publishes for pool service, not the Florida rate itself, which is not public.

## 08 WHAT AN OWNER CAN DO WITH THIS

- [ ] Measure your real average miles between stops for one week (total route miles minus the drive to and from the route, divided by stops).
- [ ] Price new accounts off the route higher, or don't take them. The model says each extra mile between stops is worth about $6.51 a month per account, of which $1.43 is cash you pay even on a route with room to spare.
- [ ] When you buy a route (report No. 07), price its density, not just its account count.
- [ ] Ask for referrals on the streets you already drive. A neighbor of a current customer is the cheapest account to serve.
- [ ] Re-run the worksheet below every time wages, gas or your price change.

WORKSHEET · WHAT YOUR ROUTE KEEPS

| LINE | YOUR NUMBER | BASE CASE |
|---|---|---|
| A. Accounts on the route | | 58 |
| B. Monthly price per account | | $143.70 |
| C. Revenue = A × B | | $8,347 |
| D. Tech pay per month (paid hours × wage × cost factor) | | $3,933 |
| E. Route miles per month | | 937 |
| F. Gas + wear = E × (gas price ÷ mpg + 0.11) | | $280 |
| G. Chemicals = A × cost per visit × 4.33 | | $1,510 |
| H. Truck, insurance and software per month | | $1,080 |
| I. Profit = C − D − F − G − H | | $1,543 |
| J. Miles between stops = (E ÷ 4.33 − daily commute × days) ÷ A | | 2 |

# 09 SOURCES


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# 10 ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

WHO MADE THIS

Ruberio is a Dutch design studio: Ruben designs, Sven answers every email. We're focused on websites for pool service companies and fence contractors in Florida. We ran this study because inquiries can come from anywhere, and an owner should know what an account across town really costs before saying yes to it. We don't sell routes, software, insurance or financing, and nobody named here paid for or reviewed this report. The model is a small Python file; we'll send it on request. If you spot an error, email hello@ruberio.com and we'll correct it and note the change.