

Streetable Silverado Part II

LAYIN' REAR FRAME WITH KP COMPONENTS



LAST MONTH WE INTRODUCED OUR LATEST PROJECT TRUCK, THE STREETABLE SILVERADO AND INSTALLED THE FRONT SUSPENSION. This month it's time to move on to the rear of the truck where we installed a KP Components 6-link and a Watts link and finished off the air suspension.

We can't praise the KP 6-link enough, and that's not just us kissing butt. The fact is that this is a well-designed kit that easily bolts in and performs like a champ, plus it gets tons of lift. It's simple to install, and can be done in a day with some good tools and a little bit of effort. The price may seem rather high, but it is offset by the uncomplicated install, which helps save money on shop costs.

Follow along as we get this truck laid out and dragging frame in a few short days, with a lot of help and a ton of Red Bull. ■

We start by putting the truck on stands and removing the rear leaf springs.



Next we had to remove the stock shackles. They are held on by rivets, which can either be ground off with a grinder or cut into quarters and knocked out with an air hammer.



Unfortunately for us, someone had welded on the flip kit. Todd busted out the plasma cutter and cut off the flip kit as well as the bump stop pads and shock mounts.



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With the axle cleaned up, we started to assemble the rear Watts link. The bushings were pressed into the center mount after being lubricated with the supplied products.



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| <p>The center link is bolted into the new mount.</p> |  <p>5</p> |  <p>11</p> | <p>Using a series of progressively larger bits we drilled the frame for the bolts.</p> |
| <p>Next we removed the bolts holding the stock differential cover. Since the axle was out of the truck, it was easy to do, but were we installing this on the truck, we'd be sure to hold the axle cover in place so as not to spill the fluid.</p> |  <p>6</p> |  <p>12</p> | <p>Then we bolted up the cantilever bracket to the frame.</p> |
| <p>Using the supplied bolts we mounted the Watts link center mount to the axle. There is also a brake line relocation hole on the top.</p> |  <p>7</p> |  <p>13</p> | <p>The forward mounts were also bolted in place. These will locate the forward parallel bars and mount where the stock front shackles go.</p> |
| <p>The forward and rear links to the KP kit bolt to the axle using a pair of U-bolts and locating tabs to ensure proper orientation.</p> |  <p>8</p> |  <p>14</p> | <p>The notch was the next hurdle. The truck had been previously outfitted with a bolt-in C-notch that was welded in. Instead of just cutting out the middle section, we started by welding in the first part of the eight-piece KP notch kit to provide extra support. It was spaced up 1-inch from the top of the frame, which should allow for a 29-inch-tall wheel and tire combo.</p> |
| <p>We moved back to the frame and started mounting the cantilever portion of the kit. Four of the bolts go through the stock rivet holes.</p> |  <p>9</p> |  <p>15</p> | <p>Eric handled the task of getting out the notch. We can't say enough good things about this guy, who really got after this process with a grinder, a hammer and a chisel. Between Todd and Eric taking turns, there was easily two hours of work just in removing the notch.</p> |
| <p>Using a punch and hammer, we marked the frame for the additional bolts that are required for the kit.</p> |  <p>10</p> |  <p>16</p> | <p>Todd then welded up the rest of the notch.</p> |

A new rear cross member was welded to the frame. This is going to hold our compressors.



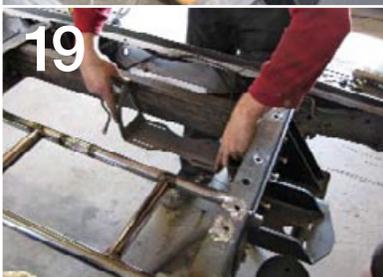
Todd used a plasma cutter to cut out a half-circle in the cross member.

Along with the rear cross member, a custom cradle built out of 1 1/2-inch tubing was welded to the frame as well. This is going to hold the air tanks.



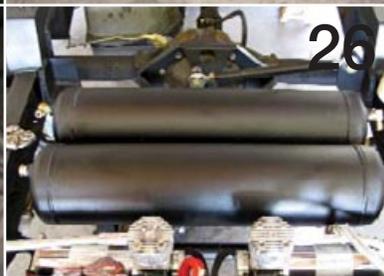
A piece of pipe was cut in half and welded in place to reinforce the cross member.

The new Viair compressor mounts from AVS were located and welded in place.



The rear cantilever links were bolted in place. It's important to install the bolts from the inside out so that the bolts won't hit the frame. We also bolted the 'bags in place at this time using the supplied fasteners.

We assembled the links using the provided lube and bushings.



With the frame painted, we bolted the compressors and aluminum tanks from AVS in the cradle and laser-cut mounts. We tapped every hole for a 1/4-20 bolt.

The Watts link kit includes bolts and steel reinforcement plates to bolt the frame mounts in place, but we opted to weld on the piece. Later we reinforced the frame with the plates.



The valves were assembled into a manifold. This means we can have one fill line fill two corners from one assembly. The two completed manifolds (one for front, one for rear) were mounted to the back of the cross member to which the compressors were mounted.

With the forward link bars mounted to the frame, we jacked up the axle to mark where to notch the gas tank cross member for the driveline.



These eight-position barrier strips can be purchased from Radio Shack and really help to clean up the wiring. We ran the wiring from each valve to the strip, then ran a harness from the back of the cab into the other end. This also makes life easier if a wire is accidentally reversed.



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This is a solenoid we picked up from Stinger that we'll use as a relay for the two compressors. It's rated at 80 amps, which is more than enough to handle the compressors. It was mounted on the same cross member as the valves.



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The 160-on/200-off pressure switch was mounted to the tanks on a tee, with the other half going to a gauge line.



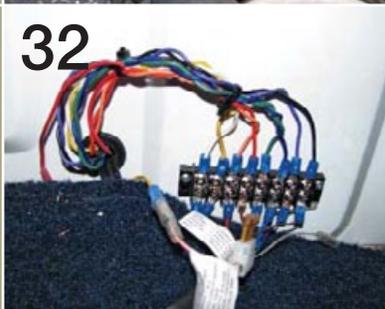
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All of the lines and wiring were run over the driver's side frame rail and bolted in place. We find that tapping bolt holes is a nice way to ensure things stay in place, as opposed to using self-tapping screws which can work their way out over time.



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The wires for the valves were run to another barrier strip that was mounted to the cab wall. The other end was connected to our AVS switch box. The only other thing we needed was a power wire going to the panel.



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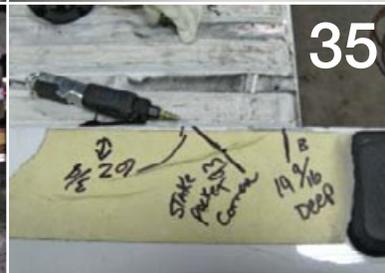
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Now it was time to body drop the bed of the truck. We took some measurements and discovered that the top of the notch was 5 1/2 inches above the top of the stock frame rail. We also knew that we'd be doing a 2 1/2-inch body drop down the line, which meant that our bed had to be dropped at least 8 inches.



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The tape measure told us that we had a little over 7 1/2 inches from the bottom of our bed rail to the top of the fender well. That wasn't enough, but we had something planned to fix that problem. We decided that we'd drop the bed 7 1/2 inches.



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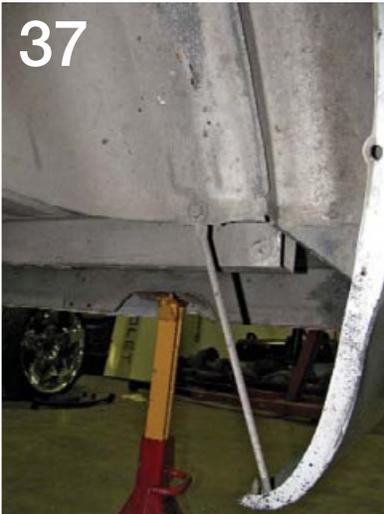
Before we cut anything, we made measurements all over the bed. From the floor to the top of the rail, corner to corner and between the rails horizontally. By doing this we can be sure that the bed will stay straight.



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Everywhere we would have to weld we ground down to bare metal. By doing this first we made life easier when the bed floor eventually came up.

First, we removed the bedside supports, and then we cut the inner fender well to release the bed sides from the body.



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The bed supports were cut and then lengthened with steel tubing that slid over the stock supports.

Using a grinder, we cut across the bedside just underneath the bedrail. We followed that with another cut that was just above the top of the fender well.



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Our secret for getting that extra 2 inches? The middle cross member that goes over the notch is 2 inches tall, so by using a plasma to take that out, we effectively gained the clearance we need when we body drop the truck.

We also made vertical cuts in the corners of the bed. This will make it easy to hide the cut in the seams.



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Finally, we spaced up the bed 7.5 inches. When we body drop the truck, we can just cut down those spacers and be good to go.

This left us with a deep cut in the cab. We cut things loose and checked our measurements to be sure we have an even drop all the way around.



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Once everything was square we welded up the bed.



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