Chapters 553/554, 2018 Acts of Assembly
Stakeholders Working Group

July 27, 2018

Participants: see sign-in rosters

General notes:
- Not meeting at VDOT facility, so next meeting (if we have it) may be somewhere else
- Move to Gmail has made email tricky, so please check your spam folders if you haven’t seen something, but expect it
- Will be taking notes, but eventually be seeking written comments from stakeholders

Overview of Study/working group (Maxwell/McGhee): see PPT
- Keith Wandtke will be conduit between Study Team and stakeholders
- Bill language will dictate the scope of the study
- No Federal legislation exists for a pilot but some language exists that provides insight to vehicle weight and configuration, evaluation requirements, and participation
- Study Purpose and Scope/Study Outline – see PPT
  - Likely outcome – data requirements for the evaluation of any pilot that would be undertaken
  - Recommendations

Questions from the Stakeholder Working Group –

- Joe (VACO)
  - Need to consider the existing condition of pavements and bridges
  - Concern about what will be required to accommodate the heavier trucks

- Ron Jenkins (Loggers association)
  - Support the original bill
  - Already have permitted legal loads that exceed 80k limit on non-interstate highways
  - Should accommodate 90k legal permit for hauling trees from harvest to mill on non-interstate

- Ken Hutcheson(Anheuser Busch)
  - Companies want to be efficient in transporting
  - No one interested in increase in threats to public safety or accelerated deterioration of highways/bridges
  - Believe data exists that indicates pilot could be implemented safely with little to no impact on roads and bridges
- 50 states already allow overweight on Primaries/Interstates/30 for Interstates
- Advocate for collection of more data
- Significant benefits – 1 foot reduction in stopping distances /reduction in pavement costs/enforcement costs/congestion costs reduction/fuel consumption/CO2/lower logistics costs – data will be submitted with written comments

- Matt Wells (Westrock Papermills)
  - Contribute $1B to Virginia economy every year
  - Largest exporter in state of Virginia
  - 3M tons of product every year
  - Hit weight limit before they cube out
  - Shortage of truckers is a challenge for the industry and fewer, fuller trucks could help
  - Higher weight limits would make them more competitive – across country and world
  - Virginia already have trucks running well over 80K lbs using various exemptions
  - Believe there is data to support that a change in the legal load would not have negative impacts to the infrastructure or safety

- Scott Johnson (International Paper)
  - Will submit written comments – concur with hauler/paper

- Rob Bohannon (Hunter Andrews – Representing Norfolk Southern)
  - Rail maintains own infrastructure
  - Trucks contribute some to infrastructure maintenance, but not much

- Tretiak (Hefty, Wiley, and Gore for Miller-Coors)
  - Would like to support the comments made by Anheuser Busch
  - Most loads ship on Interstate (plant is 15 miles from I-81)
  - I-81 corridor improvement plan underway now – this study should interface with that one
  - They estimate that a 6-axle, 91,000 lb tractor trailer would reduce the number of trucks by 16% (4000 fewer trucks on I-81)
  - Currently spend $58M a year on shipping
  - Reference Canada/Mexico where already higher loads

- Port of Virginia (Dusty Meyer)
  - Neutral on the issue of heavier trucks
  - Looking at port infrastructure – cranes to be sure they can accommodate heavier loads
  - Fewer, heavier loads could reduce “moves”
  - Mainly just want to be present in discussions

- Matt Gordon (Anheuser Busch)
  - In their opinion, increasing the load is common sense
  - Currently send 50k truck loads per year out of Williamsburg facility
  - As stated earlier, it is hard to find truck drivers
  - Spreading the load out further, across an additional axle, it’s bound to be better for the infrastructure
  - Previous study showed a 1-foot improved stopping distance due to the additional axle
  - Accident exposure, congestion, could benefit from fewer trucks
  - Written comments to come
- Tim Bentely (Norfolk Southern)
  - Only Class 1 Railroad Headquartered in Virginia
  - Must consider benefits to Commonwealth (if any) and not just benefits to industry
  - Consideration of pilot participation should also include record-keeping costs and maintenance costs of pilot
  - It would appear that the Federal pilot (as currently understood) would not include funding for participating states to alleviate additional costs
  - Current legal loads (80k lb trucks) only cover 80% of actual costs to roads
  - Rail is good partner in State
  - None of the ports are located immediately on Interstates, so heavier trucks serving the port would have to travel on non-interstate roads, causing addition damage to them

- Chris LaGow (Property Casualty Insurers)
  - Serious concerns about increased weights – profound lack of data to support that heavier is safer and concern that appropriate data won’t be available in the near future, too much inconsistency across states
  - Often don’t get weight of truck with data from crash records
  - Crash rates for 6-axle 47 to 400% higher than 5-axle trucks, according to 2015 Truck Size and Weight Study
  - Out of service violations – heavier trucks have higher rate out-of-service violations – more likely to be involved in crashes
  - Will submit statistics with written comments

- Bret Vassey (Virginia Manufacturers Assoc.)
  - Asked whether the study will consider other state/country experiences? Canada/Mexico currently allow heavier trucks
  - This is a multi-state issue – NY, VA, PA, and TN
  - Manufacture these big trucks/trailers in Virginia
  - Glad to host meeting to discuss this technology
  - Committed only if it’s safe and affordable
  - Bottom line is competition – these data points could be key

- Study Team comment – All stakeholders should think about what a good pilot would look like – what would be required to make it meaningful (e.g., multiple, contiguous states, evaluation data, truck configuration, etc.)

- Dale Bennett (Virginia Trucking Association)
  - The trucking industry is very diverse and there are people on both side of this issue
  - Will need to look at costs to actual truck operators – retrofit or new trailer/trucks
  - Companies that haul by weight, can recoup the cost of retrofitting. If they are paid by mile, that’s more difficult
  - Depending on the final configuration, some trailers may be made obsolete
  - There are positive and negative aspects to truckers

- Jeff Palmore (Smithfield Foods)
- Participation in the pilot will provide benefits to commonwealth
  - The pilot evaluation should include an assessment of CO2 impact? Fewer trucks will result in lower emissions.
  - Pilot could help efficiency/carbon footprint state and nation-wide

  - Ken Hutcheson (Anheuser Busch)
    - Achieving a public benefit is important
    - Fee permitting process would be put in place and believe in paying for the process and the data collection/analysis required
    - Believe it will be important to establish a collaborative process with VDOT to determine routing over non-interstate routes.
    - Are we getting ahead of ourselves given that there is no existing pilot currently
    - Focus now should be on issues that would be raised if Virginia gets chance to participate in Federal pilots
    - Current federal weight limits set in 1982
    - There continues to be a well-documented shortage of truck drivers
    - As a shipper, they anticipate reimbursing truck driver/operators for additional costs for added weight

  - Cannon Moss (Virginia railroad association)
    - Represents 7 short-lines that run throughout Virginia
    - Trucks that are heavier will take more business away from short lines
    - Study should address how will bigger trucks affect short-lines

  - Randy Marcus (CSX)
    - Freight moving by rail currently offset about 4M trucks
    - They estimate a 19% shift to trucks with heavier loads, so we may not see a reduction in the number of trucks on the road
    - No federal programs offering money to offset increased damage to roads/bridges

  - Katie Hellebush (VA agribusiness Association)
    - Very supportive of the pilot program

  - Paul Howe (Virginia Forestry)
    - Sawmill community very interested in what study might yield
    - Biggest challenges to forestry industry is transportation costs
    - Hoping the pilot will move forward.

  - Virginia Loggers
    - Referred to a study in Maine and Vermont – 100k gross weight allowances
    - Agree that there should be a balance between public safety and productivity
    - Although we love railroads, there’s a limit to where they reach – need to operate effectively across both modes
    - Trucking pays fuel tax and purchase overweight permits, contributing towards their fair share

General Conversation/Questions
From trucking perspectives, what sort of axle spacing are we considering?
  - Answers hopefully available for next meeting
  - Will be very important to the discussion

Routes on and off and routes regarding bridges
  - How does DMV administer program now?
  - Seems to be working pretty well

Written comments do August 10th – will there be comments accepted later – Yes

Comments will be shared with stakeholders

Remember to share any references that might provide useful data that would support more effective study

Anticipate putting together an annotated bibliography

Notes will be prepared from today’s meeting and distributed to participants

Next Steps

- Additional Stakeholder meetings – Thursday Sept, 13 and Fri Nov. 9th
- Please share written responses to Keith Wandtke
  - Meeting adjourned – 11:10am