



VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION of CHIEFS of POLICE

& Foundation

EIN #31-1502529

October 19, 2018

PRESIDENT
Chief Douglas A. Goodman, Jr.
Ashland

Keith R. Wandtke
Senior Policy Analyst
Governance and Legislative Affairs
Virginia Department of Transportation

Re: opposition to Virginia's participation in a 91,000-pound truck pilot project

IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT
Colonel Kelvin L. Wright
Chesapeake

Dear Mr. Wandtke,

1ST VICE PRESIDENT
Chief Howard Hall
Roanoke County

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police is opposed to the introduction of heavier commercial trucks on our highways as well as the proposed 91,000-pound heavy truck pilot project. Our position is consistent with the position of the International Association of Chiefs of Police because of our critical concern for the safety of our law enforcement officers and for the motoring public. Just this month, Hanover Fire Lt. Brad Clark lost his life, and three other firefighters were injured, due to the reckless operation of a freight truck with defective brakes on I-295.

2ND VICE PRESIDENT
Chief Maggie DeBoard
Hemdon

3RD VICE PRESIDENT
Chief A. J. Panebianco
Middleburg

Virginia is the crossroads of several heavily traveled interstates that often are congested with truck traffic. For example, Interstate 81 has one of the heaviest volumes of truck traffic on the East Coast where there are numerous truck crashes on a regular basis. Trucks that are under the 81k limit have difficulty climbing the many hills, which causes a dangerous speed difference between the truck and other traffic. Increased weights above the current limits will only exacerbate this problem.

BOARD MEMBERS
Chief Thomas Bennett
Suffolk

Chief Bradley Rinehimer
James City County

Chief Keith Hartman
Buena Vista

Chief Craig Branch
Germanna Community College

Chief Timothy Jones
Roanoke

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Transportation found significantly higher crash rates associated with trucks of 91,000 pounds or higher when compared to those of 80,000 pounds or less. Further, the same study also found 18% higher braking violation rates for these trucks. (USDOT; 2016. Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Final Report to Congress) Another study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that trucks with any out-of-service violations are three and a half times more likely to be involved in a crash. (IIHS; 2016. Crash risk factors for interstate large trucks in North Carolina).

EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR
Dana G. Schrad

MEMBERSHIP &
EVENTS MANAGER
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COMMUNICATIONS
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FINANCE MANAGER
C. Suzanne Robitson

Pilot programs for heavier trucks are unworkable because of the uncertainty of their safety outcomes. These pilot programs amount to little more than experimenting with heavier trucks on public roads and bridges with other motorists. USDOT has recommended against weight increases and has laid out a clear path to gather the necessary data without implementing hazardous pilot projects. (USDOT; 2016. Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Final Report to Congress). Further, since no such federal pilot project currently exists, it would be difficult for any report to reflect accurately specific outcomes for our state. Volunteering our motorists, and our patrol officers, to participate in this pilot project experiment exposes the citizens of the Commonwealth to an unacceptable level of risk. We ask that VDOT take these comments from Virginia's police chiefs into account and recommend against the 91,000-pound truck pilot project for Virginia.

FOUNDATION PROGRAMS
MANAGER
Stephanie Diaz

Regards,

Dana G. Schrad
Executive Director



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P. Dale Bennett
President & CEO

October 5, 2018

Via Email

Mr. Keith R. Wandtke
Senior Policy Analyst
Governance and Legislative Affairs
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Wandtke:

On behalf of the Virginia Trucking Association, we are pleased to provide these comments as part of the Chapters 553/554, 2018 Acts of Assembly stakeholders working group.

As background, the Virginia Trucking Association (VTA) is the only statewide organization in Virginia dedicated solely to representing the interests of trucking fleet operators and their allied vendors. The VTA represents trucking fleets of all sizes and scope that operate commercial vehicles to transport freight in and through the Commonwealth of Virginia. Our membership also includes companies that supply goods and services to truck operators.

The VTA opposes increasing the weight limits in Virginia to allow operation of 6-axle vehicles with a maximum gross vehicle weight of 91,000 lbs. Our opposition is based on our concern that the trucking industry would bear the burden of the capital expense to retrofit/replace trailers and tractors to legally operate under the higher weight limit without being able to recover these costs through rate increases.

Equipment Retrofit and Capital Costs:

The 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration will require the retrofit or replacement of the vast majority of trailers in today's fleet. These are the costs associated with retrofitting trailers:

- The cost to complete a trailer retrofit varies based on a trailer's manufacturer and its configuration for use in five-axle operations. The approximate cost to add the extra axle and lengthen (for dry vans) or replace (for refrigerated trailers) the axle slide bar ranges between \$3,000 and \$4,800 per trailer. Most truckload carriers have a trailer to tractor ratio of 3:1.
- For a larger company with a fleet of 100 trucks, the cost to retrofit 300 trailers would be between \$900,000 and \$1.5 million.
- The vast majority of trucking companies are small fleets operating 20 or less trucks. A 20-truck small-business trucking fleet would face a cost of \$180,000 to \$288,000 to retrofit 60 trailers – a cost that many small businesses cannot afford.

- One advocate for the 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration estimated the cost of adding a sixth axle would be about \$7,400 per trailer. Using that estimate, the retrofit cost for a small, 20-truck fleet would be \$440,000.
- The cost of adding an axle on a liquid trailer would be \$10,000 to \$13,000, not including the cost to lengthen the frame. Thus, for a liquid tank carrier with fleet of 60 trailers, the cost to retrofit would be \$600,000 to \$780,000.
- In addition to the third axle on a trailer, carriers would also need to consider the additional costs of trailer reinforcements and engine improvements in order to accommodate the increased weight.
- Retrofit is not always possible for the many different types of specialized trailers in use in trucking. For example, many tank trailers cannot be retrofitted with an additional axle because of how they are configured. These tank trailers can cost anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 or more. Tank truck carriers are very concerned that the move to a 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration will render their fleets obsolete and quickly reduce their equity in this expensive equipment to \$0.

Ongoing Operating Costs:

In addition to the retrofit/replacement costs, there will be additional, ongoing operational costs associated with shifting the 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration:

- Carriers would upgrade to wide brake drums and oversize brakes to compensate for the increased weight. The additional axle, drums and brakes adds approximately 3,000 pounds to the trailer's weight, decreasing the productivity gains touted by the proponents.
- The extra axle, whether or not the trailer is hauling the additional weight, will increase rolling resistance and result in fuel economy degradation of .5 miles per gallon, up to as much as 1.2 miles per gallon fully loaded.
- Carriers would likely want to consider switching to tires with higher ratings and altering their tire maintenance schedules. Purchasing higher rated tires will increase new tire costs for fleets.
- The statistics will vary by carrier and commodity mix, but general freight haulers will tell you that 50% of loads will cube out (fill the trailer) before they max out their current weight allowance. Most carriers also run approximately 10% of their total miles empty, meaning 60% of the time they will be dragging around an extra axle at a greatly reduced fuel economy (minimum 7% reduction) to accommodate 91,000 lbs. on 6 axles.
- There will likely be undetermined, additional permit fees and taxes for carriers to operate at the higher weights in Virginia.

Our opposition to allowing operation of 6-axle vehicles with a maximum gross vehicle weight of 91,000 lbs. leads the VTA to oppose legislation "pre-authorizing" VDOT to participate in this hypothetical pilot program.

The 91,000 Lbs./6 Axle Configuration Will Become The De Facto Maximum Weight Limit.

- Proponents of the 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration argue that allowing this configuration or participation in a pilot program would not preclude any carrier from operating current configurations, yet history demonstrates otherwise.
- The shift from 48-foot trailers to 53-foot trailers was exactly this issue, only in reverse. Shippers who filled trailers by volume before maximizing the allowable weight put pressure on industry to move to 53' trailers. Like the current proposal, there were pilot programs prior to it being legalized across the nation.
- As it happened with 53-foot trailers, the 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration would become the norm and carriers would face tremendous pressure to retrofit/replace their equipment to accommodate this configuration regardless of whether the freight requires a 6th axle.

Virginia's Trucking Fleets Will Bear the Cost of This Experiment.

- Carriers are unlikely to see rate increases that fully offset the cost of moving the additional weight, let alone recouping the costs of retrofitting all of their equipment.
- Certainly, no one will pay for the increased cost of fuel associated with a 6th axle, especially if it was not required for the shipment.
- The cost burden will fall squarely on the carrier, to the benefit of those shippers who own the goods.

The VTA believes that the more prudent course of action is for Virginia to wait until Congress has passed legislation to authorize creation of this pilot program before deciding on whether VDOT should participate.

There Are Too Many Unanswered Questions and No Details about the Hypothetical Pilot Program.

- In earlier comments, other businesses and organizations raised a number of questions that VDOT cannot answer until it knows more about the requirements and parameters of participating in the hypothetical pilot program. The trucking industry also has questions that are difficult for VDOT to answer until we know more about the pilot program, including:
- What are the axle spacing requirements to operate the 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration - an important element in determining equipment retrofit costs?
- How much will a permit to participate in the pilot cost?
- Will there be additional trailer strength, braking and tire rating requirements to operate a 91,000 lbs./6 axle configuration?
- How much will it cost for VDOT to participate in the pilot program? How will VDOT recover this cost or will it require diversion of funds from other pressing highway needs?

There Is No Urgency to Authorize VDOT to Participate in the Pilot Program.

- Proponents of the 2018 legislation testified that Virginia should act now so it would be ready to participate when the federal pilot program is enacted. Thus far, attempts to pass legislation creating the pilot have failed in Congress and there is no current proposal in Congress. Given the current difficulties of passing controversial legislation in Congress, it is not likely that legislation authorizing a 91,000 lbs./6-axle pilot program will be enacted quickly or anytime soon.
- If Congress does authorize a pilot program, the U.S. Department of Transportation will need a period of time to create and publish the requirements and parameters for a state to participate in a pilot program.
- We believe there will be plenty of time for VDOT to provide the General Assembly more certain information about the impacts of Virginia's potential participation in the pilot program to consider in making this important policy decision.

Please contact me if there are any questions or a need for additional information.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and participate as a member of the working group.

Sincerely,



P. Dale Bennett
President & CEO



P.O. Box 2277, Harrisonburg, VA 22801; 540-433-2451; hobey@vapoultry.com

October 3, 2018

Mr. Keith Wandthe
Virginia Department of Transportation
Review of Enrollment in Federal Pilot Program/Project
VIA – Email

Dear Mr. Wandtke

I am writing on behalf of Virginia Poultry Federation (VPF) to share our views concerning the Commonwealth of Virginia's participation in the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) program to collect data on increasing weights for six-axle vehicles up to 91,000 pounds gross vehicle weight.

VPF is a nonprofit trade association that promotes the interests of Virginia's poultry and egg industry through public and government relations and educational programs. Virginia's largest agricultural sector, the poultry industry contributes about \$13 billion annually to the Virginia economy; supports the livelihood of some 1,100 family farms; and employs more than 15,000 people.

Efficient, economical, and safe transportation systems are extremely important to the poultry industry. VPF estimates that trucks serving the poultry industry travel at least 15 million miles annually on Interstate 81 alone. Interstate 95 is also an important corridor for transportation of poultry products.

VPF supports authorization for Virginia to participate in a voluntary federal pilot program for modernized trucks that will safely operate more efficiently and productively than 80,000 lb. vehicles. Adopting an option for a modernized 91,000 pound, six axle configuration could reduce the total number of trucks on the road, and actually alleviate wear and tear according to a federal study. The 2015 DOT's Technical Findings in its Truck Size and Weight Study indicated that broad use of the 91,000 pound/six axle configuration would reduce life-cycle pavement costs. Importantly, DOT found that the six axle vehicle, which has an additional set of breaks, handled comparably and was able to brake one foot shorter than the five axle, 80,000 pound vehicle. This configuration has potential to reduce operational costs for shippers and our environmental footprint through less carbon emissions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your consideration of our input on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hobey Bauhan".

Hobey Bauhan
President



October 3, 2018

Mr. Keith Wandtke
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: Review of Enrollment in Federal Pilot Program/Project

Dear Mr. Wandtke:

On behalf of the 38,000 producer members of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation I respectfully submit this letter of support for the Commonwealth of Virginia to participate in a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) program to collect data on increasing weights for six-axle vehicles up to 91,000 pounds gross vehicle weight.

The Virginia Farm Bureau Federation is the largest general farm organization in the Commonwealth of Virginia. We support legislation and regulations that support our agricultural producers' ability to move their products to market in the most economically feasible manner while making sure the roads are safe for each citizen to use.

We have long supported the ability to use Virginia's overweight permits on Federal highways, we believe this pilot study would be a step in the right direction by looking at how the trucking industry could carry heavier loads on the interstate highways with the proper axle configuration.

As you may know the agriculture and forest industries in Virginia contribute \$91 billion to Virginia's economy, including supporting 442,200 jobs. The pilot would provide the opportunity for the Commonwealth to gather additional data and information, including the safety and impact on mileage.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your consideration of our input on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrew W. Smith", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Andrew W. Smith
Associate Director
Governmental Relations



VIRGINIA LOGGERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

"Voice for Virginia's Professional Loggers"

September 13, 2018

Reference: Virginia Acts of Assembly Chapter 553/554

Mr. Keith Wandtke
Virginia Department of Transportation

Dear Keith:

The Virginia Loggers Association (VLA) is grateful for the opportunity to provide its thoughts, ideas and concerns regarding the effort to develop a comprehensive report for the Virginia General Assembly to consider before authorizing VDOT to participate in a federal pilot for six axle vehicles weighing 91,000 pounds.

The Virginia Loggers Association is a 501 C (6) trade organization serving logging businesses and many other businesses engaged in Virginia's forest products industry. We currently represent 350 businesses and a significant number of employees who are members.

The Virginia Loggers Association leaders understand that our forest products industry relies heavily upon commercial trucking to haul its products. Governor McAuliffe approved legislation unanimously passed by the House of Delegates and the Senate which now allows our industry to haul logs, chips, tree length, residuals and green rough sawn lumber at the maximum weight of 90,000 pounds with five axle combinations and at least 48 feet from the front steering axle to the last axle on Virginia highways. The authority is widely supported by all of our forest products industry but does not apply to interstate highways and posted bridges.

We support all efforts to make all of our highways safe for all drivers. VLA and the 32 state associations of the American Loggers Council also support legalizing the state's maximum legal hauling weights on the interstates. We believe our interstate highways are the safest corridors for commerce, trade and the public.

Regarding the pilot study information collection underway at VDOT, please include VLA as supportive of the federal pilot for six axle and 91,000 pounds on interstate highways so long

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The Virginia Loggers Association proudly endorses Forestry Mutual Insurance as the preferred provider of Virginia workers compensation insurance.
Chris Huff; chuff@forestrymutual.com • 919-810-9485

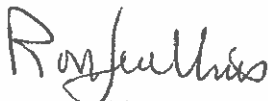
as it recommends all current legal maximum weight limits in Virginia law also be included in any future federal pilot. In particular, we ask that VDOT includes in its report to the General Assembly that it should also include the existing statute of 90,000 pounds with five axle truck tractor- trailer combination.

The VLA understands the tremendous magnitude of the effort that will fall upon VDOT if the General Assembly decides to move forward. We believe that such efforts are necessary if Virginia and our nation really want to make improvements in our highway safety and efficiency.

Our entire society depends on our transportation infrastructure for commerce, trade and for citizens to move about in the safest and efficient manner. We believe that our future transportation condition will only be reached by investment today. VLA supports all efforts to ensure that no sector is left out in the future as we strive together to meet higher safety and efficiency levels.

The General Assembly should be made fully aware of all aspects of Virginia's transportation infrastructure constituents and fully fund the necessary efforts to maximize the gains from any future federal pilot.

Sincerely,



Ron Jenkins
Executive Director