



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: September 8, 2000

In reply refer to: H-00-16 through -18

Honorable Kenneth R. Wykle
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Washington, DC 20590

In April 1999, the National Transportation Safety Board began a Truck/Bus Safety Initiative and to date has held four public hearings¹ to obtain information from a variety of sources about the relevant safety issues regarding trucks and buses and on how to address them. Participating in these hearings were representatives from the truck and bus industries, vehicle and equipment manufacturers, labor unions, safety advocacy groups, and various State and Federal agencies. One issue, emerging from hearing testimony, was the insufficient number of parking spaces² for truckdrivers who want or need to use them.

The 1996 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funded study *Commercial Driver Rest and Parking Requirements: Making Space for Safety*³ was conducted by the Trucking Research Institute in response to Senate recommendations to evaluate “the adequacy of places for truckdrivers to stop and rest, both public and private.” While a detailed survey of public rest areas was conducted, the survey of private truck stops was more cursory and was based on statistical weighting of the 17 percent of private truck stops that completed and returned the survey.

Several States have begun conducting studies on their own to determine where the parking shortages exist and to examine innovative ways to alleviate the shortages. The FHWA will use the information that has been developed by the States to support its upcoming Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) section 4027 study, which builds on its 1996 research.

¹ Held between April 14 and 16, 1999, the first hearing focused on motor carrier oversight. Held between August 31 and September 2, 1999, the second hearing examined advanced technology applications that may reduce the number of accidents involving trucks and buses. Held between October 20 and 22, 1999, the third hearing reviewed the highway transportation safety aspects of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Held on January 20 and 21, 2000, the fourth hearing examined commercial driver licensing and medical certification issues.

² Parking spaces refer to all authorized nonemergency parking areas, both public and private.

³ FHWA-MC-96-0010. May 1996.

The FHWA is conducting a follow-up commercial motor vehicle parking study, as mandated by Congress in TEA-21 section 4027. The purpose of this study is “to determine the location and quantity of parking facilities at commercial truck stops and travel plazas and public rest areas that could be used by motor carriers to comply with Federal hours-of-service rules.” This study differs from the FHWA 1996 effort in that it covers the entire national highway system (150,000 miles) and all facilities, both public and private.

The complete undertaking is funded for \$500,000 per year for 3 years (FY ‘99 through FY ‘01). During FY ‘99, about \$80,000 was spent on the FHWA Rest Area Forum and its associated efforts. The results of the Rest Area Forum were published in *Rest Area Forum: Summary of Proceedings*,⁴ which identifies for Federal, State, and private sector customers how best to proceed to improve parking. Approximately \$420,000 of the FY ‘99 funds were allocated to:

1. conduct a survey of 2,000 randomly selected drivers to understand their decisionmaking process for parking choices;
2. develop a methodology for assessing the parking shortages, performing an independent evaluation of the extent; and
3. present the geographical distribution of parking shortages.

The remainder of the funds are to be used to create partnership groups in each of the 50 States, to have a national contractor inventory, and to analyze the parking shortages in each State. In conjunction with the contractor, each State will then develop plans to reduce the parking shortages.

On May 16, 2000, the FHWA cohosted with the contractor a meeting of stakeholders in the truck rest parking study. Shippers, brokers, and consignees were not represented at this meeting. Shippers, brokers, and consignees frequently influence truck schedules, and, therefore, the Safety Board concludes that they should be an integral part of any solution to the truck parking area dilemma. The Safety Board believes that the FHWA should include the National Industrial Transportation League as a stakeholder in the ongoing truck rest parking study that is being conducted per TEA-21 section 4027 legislation.

Federal law prohibits States from allowing private entities to sell goods in interstate public rest areas for profit. Some exceptions exist for toll roads such as the New York State Thruway and the Pennsylvania Turnpike because these roads were built before being designated interstates. This Federal law was enacted to prevent unfair advantages for private companies that are directly accessible from the interstate over those companies that operate at an exit off the interstate.⁵

⁴ FHWA-RD-00-034. December 1999.

⁵ Under 23 *United States Code* 111, a State cannot permit automotive service stations, or other commercial establishments for serving motor vehicle users, to be constructed or located on the rights-of-way of the interstate system.

Due to the rising cost of constructing and maintaining public rest areas and the decreasing availability of public funding, a 1998 research study,⁶ sponsored by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and the FHWA, was conducted to explore experiences with current, and opportunities for future, commercialized rest areas. The study found that some of the advantages of commercialized rest areas are reduced costs and increased services and safety. According to the study, commercialized rest areas on toll roads have been successful. Concerns about privatization on the interstate include the lack of control by the Government and the unfair advantages for the contracted company. According to the study, trade groups are generally opposed to rest area privatization, but strong public support for privatization exists.

Several States have investigated various aspects of rest area commercialization, and a majority of State departments of transportation are interested in commercialization. Federal law must be modified to permit commercialized rest area services on the right-of-way of the interstate system. Some States may also need to modify their laws.

Given the ever increasing need for limited public funds, public/private partnerships for parking area development may provide a way to expand commercial vehicle parking. To date, several States have explored the commercialization of and public/private partnerships for rest areas. Public/private partnerships are one way to facilitate the construction and maintenance of truck parking areas without costing the State large sums of money that may not be at hand. The Safety Board concludes that the prohibition against private development of rest area facilities on interstates may be an impediment to the construction of adequate truck parking. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that the FHWA should, as part of the report to Congress on TEA-21 section 4027, evaluate the benefits, related to truck parking, of eliminating the prohibition against private development of rest area facilities on interstates. Should this evaluation conclude that truck parking could be improved, the FHWA should obtain legislative authority to eliminate the prohibition where needed.

Currently, truckdrivers have a number of guides available to them that they can consult to find the nearest parking in case their trip is delayed for some reason, such as weather or traffic. Two such guides are Interstate America's *Truck Stops* (\$11.95) and *Exit Guide* (\$17.95), which contain information on all travel-related businesses and services (including the size of truck parking lots) at every exit, as well as details on public rest areas and weigh stations. Still another publication is the TR Publishing *National Truck Stop Directory*, "*The Trucker's Friend*." (\$9.95) This directory contains information on private truck stops, including the interstate, exit number, map grid location, services, number of parking spaces, and whether the lot is paved.

In addition, some commercial software mapping programs are available that provide information on private truck stops at interstate exits. For example, DeLorme Street Atlas USA 7.0 (\$44.95) contains exit service information, including the availability of truck parking and the direction in which the driver must exit for the private truck stop. As more computers are installed in truck cabs, mapping software may be an excellent system to keep drivers informed of nearby

⁶ Gattis, J.L., and Tooley, M.S. *Rural Rest Area Privatization Conditions*. January 1998. MBTC-FR- 1071. Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department.

public rest areas and truck stops throughout the country and to allow the drivers to plan routes that will place them near truck stops when they want or need to rest.

Truckdrivers know the regulations regarding hours-of-service, how long they are allowed to drive, and how long they should rest. If truckdrivers possess accurate information on the locations of public rest areas, private truck stops, and alternative parking locations, they should be able to plan their trips so that they can take advantage of the parking that is available.

While the commercial guides that are available are comprehensive with respect to private truck stops and public rest areas, they do not include all parking that may be available, such as park-and-ride lots or weigh stations. Maryland and Michigan are both independently updating truckers' maps to indicate where other parking is available and providing more detailed information to drivers.

Truckdrivers need to be informed of parking alternatives, possibly through the use of better signage, maps, or pamphlets to identify private truck stops and public rest areas with truck parking; the operation of radio or national cellular telephone numbers to communicate public rest area or private truck stop information; and the application of Intelligent Transportation Systems technology to deliver real-time parking information. The Safety Board concludes that while existing guides and mapping programs may list the private truck stops and public rest areas, they are not all-inclusive of the available truck parking, such as alternative locations like park-and-ride lots and weigh stations. Also, the Safety Board concludes that some truckdrivers do not have enough information on parking locations and need to be made aware of all available parking, both in advance of and during trips.

The States are making an effort to instruct drivers, but the burden should not be left completely on the States' shoulders. With the help of the Federal Government and industry, the full loop of instruction can be closed so that drivers can plan where to stop and park safely.

In fact, dispatchers can even help drivers find a place to park. In many large trucking companies, the trucks are equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) that enable dispatchers to tell drivers where to pick up a load, where to drop off a load, and where to get gas, based on the truck's precise location. GPS, combined with an electronic guide, could let dispatchers notify truckdrivers of the nearest parking areas. Companies, in an effort to improve safety, can help ensure that their drivers find a safe place to park. The Safety Board concludes that the GPS technology, combined with electronic maps, could also be used to help drivers locate parking areas. The Safety Board believes that the FHWA, in cooperation with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, should create a comprehensive guide, available both on paper and in electronic format, for all truckdrivers to use that will inform drivers about the locations of all parking areas (both private and public) and the space availability.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Highway Administration:

Include the National Industrial Transportation League as a stakeholder in the ongoing truck rest parking study that is being conducted per the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century section 4027 legislation. (H-00-16)

As part of the report to Congress on the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century section 4027, evaluate the benefits, related to truck parking, of eliminating the prohibition against private development of rest area facilities on interstates. Should this evaluation conclude that truck parking could be improved, obtain legislative authority to eliminate the prohibition where needed. (H-00-17)

Cooperate with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to create a comprehensive guide, available both on paper and in electronic format, for all truckdrivers to use that will inform drivers about the locations of all parking areas (both private and public) and the space availability. (H-00-18)

Also, the Safety Board issued safety recommendations to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration; Governors of Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington; American Trucking Associations, Inc.; Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association; National Private Truck Council; National Association of Truck Stop Operators; and National Industrial Transportation League.

Please refer to Safety Recommendations H-00-16 through -18 in your reply. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 314-6170.

Chairman HALL and Members HAMMERSCHMIDT, GOGLIA, and BLACK concurred in these recommendations.

By: Jim Hall
Chairman