

Truck Size and Weight Issues during COVID-19 Response

Geno Koehler,
Permit Unit Chief,
Illinois Department
of Transportation

Agenda

1. Opening Remarks and Introductions
2. Emergency Permit Issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic
3. Business case for automated permitting
4. Consolidating information about emergency declarations and freight permitting
5. Resolution to amend AASHTO Policy Principles to Reauthorization to give more emergency authority to governors

Opening Remarks

- Geno Koehler, Permit Unit Chief Illinois Department of Transportation

Discussions with

- AASHTO Freight Operations Working Group Chairs and Regional Subcommittee on Highway Transport Chairs
- FHWA
- American Trucking Association
- Specialized Carriers and Rigging Association
- Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance
- Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association
- Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (new invitee)

Emergency Permit Issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic (1/3)

- **March 13** - President Trump issued a Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak

- **March 14-26**

- Section 1511 of MAP-21 grants States authority to issue Special Permits to vehicles with divisible loads delivering relief supplies during a Presidentially-declared emergency or major disaster under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.)
- States unsure if Stafford Act was invoked
- Some states raised permitted weight limits, some didn't
- Nothing was coordinated: WA went to 160,000 lbs, IL 90,000 lbs, and AL 88,000 lbs

- **March 23**

- Meeting FHWA, AASHTO staff, Freight Operations Chairs, and SCOHT regional chairs about truck size and weight in COVID-19 response
- FHWA verbally described solutions, including an approach to specify allowable weights and configurations and to issue multistate permits
- FOWG surveyed states

Emergency Permit Issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic (2/3)

- **March 23** – FHWA letter to AASHTO requesting that states not “place undue restrictions on the National Network” or close rest areas
- **March 24** – AASHTO letter to FHWA requested “programmatic permits”
- **March 27** - Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (HR 748) clarified that the Stafford Act applied and states could raise permitted weights for emergency supplies. More states raised their weights since then.
- **March 30** – Letter from producers to state governors asking states to “increase truck weights on all U.S. highways and Federal Interstate Highways within its jurisdiction to a minimum of 88,000 pounds—while respecting bridge and posted seasonal or special road and/or local limitations.”

Emergency Permit Issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic (3/3)

• **April 1** – Webinar with Freight Operations Working Group, Special Committee on Freight, and FHWA shared permitting survey results with the states.

- Most states are allowing overweight divisible loads
- Ambiguity exists regarding emergency status
- States' ability to grant permit types varies
- States have concerns about multi-state permits
- No clear preference for a uniform allowance exists
- Some states would impose lighting and flagging requirements for overweight vehicles
- States indicated it is difficult to go backwards and change allowable weights
- States stated they wanted to focus on lessons that can be applied to the next disaster

• **April 7** – FHWA letter to AASHTO granted permission for “programmatic permits”

• **April 27** – Meeting with AASHTO, FHWA, American Trucking Association, Specialized Carriers and Rigging Association, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, and Owner-Operations Independent Drivers Association to discuss truck size and weight issues during COVID-19 response

Business case for automated permitting

- Advocated by industry, supported by state experience
- Plan to survey the states
 - Which states have automated permitting systems?
 - How long have they had them?
 - What are systems' capabilities?
 - How do they pay for deployment and operation?
 - Would they like to make enhancements?
 - What are the benefits to the states?
 - What are barriers to states that don't have systems?
- Potential actions may include presentation to CTSO, presentation to BoD, new Technical Service Program or new AASHTOWare program

Consolidating information about emergency declarations and freight permitting

Many groups share similar information, but much is incorrect or out of date

- <https://www.cvsaemergencydeclarations.org/> - CVSA (FMCSA)
- <https://cra.inl.gov/> - Idaho National Lab (DHS CISA)
- <https://www.trucking.org/COVID19> - American Trucking Assn.
- <https://www.scranet.org/SCRA/Content/news/SCRA-COVID-19-Crisis-Command-Center.aspx?hkey=e9b4da19-2ea1-4c9d-ae39-c28101533720&WebsiteKey=001fe5fc-27b8-4ad4-8d73-ecd309a18375> - SCRA
- <https://dropfile.aashto.org/index.php/s/gjKIQss7vXi1cyZ> - AASHTO

Multiple inconsistent “definitive sources” are the same as none

How can we keep each other informed as emergency declarations end?

Resolution to
amend AASHTO
Policy Principles
to
Reauthorization
to give more
authority to
governors in
emergencies

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that AASHTO should amend PR-3-19 to add the following bullet to Core Policy Principle #4:

“Facilitate the efficient movement of emergency supplies on the Interstate Highway System by granting States authority to issue special permits to overweight vehicles with divisible loads delivering relief supplies during any emergency declared by the President of the United States, the Governor of a State, or their authorized representatives having authority to declare emergencies.”

Resolution to
amend AASHTO
Policy Principles
to
Reauthorization
to give more
authority to
governors in
emergencies

Background document (to be developed)

- How will this resolution help the states?
 - Authority to issue permits to divisible overweight loads for state-declared emergencies would enable states to respond more quickly to national emergencies and to respond to applicable state and regional emergencies. Nothing in the resolution precludes states from maintaining necessary limitations to protect infrastructure.
- What are the fiscal impacts?
 - There appear to be no significant direct impacts.
- How do we communicate this to different groups in AASHTO?
 - CTSO, Special Committee on Freight, Committee on Maintenance, Committee on Bridges and Structures
 - Transportation Policy Forum, Board of Directors
- How will the resolution be operationalized?
 - If the resolution is passed, the first step would be to revise the Policy Principles. The next step would be to draft legislative language (paralleling 42 USC § 390.23 Relief from Regulations) and advocate inclusion in the next highway bill.

Summary

- Emergency Declarations
- Harmonization
- Automated Permitting
- National Coordination

Questions?

- Geno Koehler, geno.koehler@illinois.gov
- (217) 785-8967