



**Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for
Transportation and Highway Safety**

Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy

Minutes

Date: Thursday March 3 and Friday March 4, 2005
Location: Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Vancouver Airport
Chair: John Pearson
In Attendance: (See Attachment 1)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. Pearson called the meeting to order and welcomed participants. He acknowledged the delegation from Alaska and conveyed the appreciation of the Task Force for their interest and participation in the meeting. He noted that this was a most welcome opportunity to discuss means to improve the compatibility of regulations within the region.

2. Round Table Introductions

A round table introduction of participants was conducted.

3. Review and Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as circulated.

4. Compatibility of Vehicle Size and Weight Regulations:

a) Canadian Context and Perspectives

Mr. Pearson provided a brief overview (Attachment 2) of the history of vehicle weight and dimension regulations within Canada, including the research carried out in the mid-1980's in support of development of national standards endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 1988. He reviewed the concept of performance-based regulations, and the specific criteria that had been adopted in Canada for use in assessing the potential impacts of candidate changes in vehicle weights or dimensions. He reviewed the role and work of the Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy since 1988, in pursuit of greater uniformity of regulations within Canada.

b) Alaska Context and Perspectives

Mr. Thompson provided an overview of the size and weight regulatory environment in Alaska (Attachment 3). He outlined the types of trucking operations which take place in the state, including the use of Longer Combination Vehicles (LCV's). He noted that there were opportunities to improve the efficiency and productivity of transportation between Canada and Alaska through consideration of regulatory harmonization measures. He noted that the prospect of development of new pipeline construction in the north provided added incentive to consider such opportunities.

5. Potential Harmonization Areas

a) Tandem Axle Weights

The regulated weight limits on tandem axle groups were compared within the region. It was noted that the limit under the Canadian national standards (MOU) is 17,000 kg (37,479 lb) and the limit in Alaska is 17,240 kg (38,000 kg).

In the interests of harmonization, **it was agreed** that Canadian jurisdictions would consider the implications of increasing tandem axle weight limits to match those in Alaska.

Action: Canadian jurisdictions

b) Tridem Axle Weights

The regulated weight limits on tridem axle groups were compared within the region. It was noted that the limit under the Canadian national standards (MOU) ranges from 21,000 kg (46,297 lb) for close spaced tridems to 24,000 kg (52,911 lb) for wide spaced tridems, while the weight limit for tridems in Alaska is 19,051 kg (42,000 lb).

In the interests of harmonization, **it was agreed** that Alaska would consider the implications of increasing tridem axle weight limits to match those in Canada.

Action: Alaska

c) B Train Weights

It was noted that the gross vehicle weight limit for 8 axle B Trains under the Canadian national standards (MOU) is 62,500 kg (137,789 lb), while in Alaska the current weight limit is 51,256 kg (113,000 lb.). In discussion it was noted that the weight limit in Alaska is controlled by US Bridge Formula.

In the interests of harmonization, **it was agreed** that Alaska would consider the implications of increasing the GVW limit for 8 axle B Trains within the constraints provided by the Bridge Formula.

Action: Alaska

d) Bridge Formula

It was noted that there appeared to be profound differences in the weight restrictions imposed by the bridge formulas used in Canada and the United States. Mr. Thompson reported that the US Bridge formula has been under review for some time, and that changes may be considered in the future.

It was agreed that discussion between the bridge engineers would be helpful to understand the differences in approaches used to rate the capacity of bridges, and that steps would be taken to initiate dialogue and exchange of experience.

Action: All jurisdictions

e) Overall Length Limit: Rocky Mountain Doubles

Policies regarding the operation of LCV's within the region were reviewed and compared. **It was agreed** that the overall length issue needed to be considered in the broader context of special permit conditions, with no specific action to be taken on the length of Rocky Mountain Doubles at this time.

f) Escort Vehicles:

Policies regarding the use of escort vehicles within the region were reviewed and compared.

g) Weather & Road Condition Reporting:

Mr. Thompson provided an overview of the system which had been implemented in Alaska to provide real-time weather and road condition information. He reported that the system was working very well, and circulated literature on the service. He noted that this item was for information only, and that no action proposed.

h) Overall Length Limit: A train Doubles

It was noted that the overall length limit for double trailer combinations under the Canadian national standards (MOU) is 25 metres (82 ft), while in Alaska A Train doubles can operate at lengths up to 25.9 m (85 ft). In discussion it was agreed that the consequences of this difference were of primary concern to Alaska and Yukon for operations on a specific route. **It was agreed** that this issue would best be discussed on a bilateral basis by the two jurisdictions.

Action: Alaska, Yukon

i) Overall Height Limit:

The regulated height limits were compared within the region. It was noted overall height limit for under the Canadian national standards (MOU) is 4.15 metres (13.6 ft), while in Alaska the height limit is 4.27 metres (14').

Mr. Pearson noted that the national standards for dimension limits in Canada were based in part on the findings of the research program done in the mid-1980's, and that roll stability performance had been a consideration in selection of height limit. Mr. Elliot noted that there were concerns in BC with clearance under structures and snowsheds for some routes, which might not accommodate taller vehicles or trailers.

It was agreed that Canadian jurisdictions would consider the implications of increasing the overall height limit to 4.27 metres, the regulated limit in Alaska.

Action: Canadian jurisdictions

j) Tractor Wheelbase Limits

It was noted that Alaska, and other states, does not restrict the wheelbase of tractors used in single or double trailer combinations, while Canadian regulations generally restrict tractor wheelbase to a maximum of 6.2 metres (244 in).

Mr. Pearson provided a review of the offtracking performance criteria adopted by Canada for the national standards, and the accompanying rationale for restricting the wheelbases of both tractors and trailers to control low speed turning performance within the constraints provided by highway geometry.

It was agreed that this issue would remain on the agenda for further discussion in the future.

k) Summary and Follow Up Actions

In addition to the follow up actions noted in previous sections, it was agreed that a better understanding of the differences in regulatory requirements within the region would be helpful to support further discussions.

It was agreed that a survey of regulatory policies and limits would be prepared, using the format contained in the Canadian MOU, for the following vehicle configurations:

- (1) Tractor Semitrailer – Six Axles (tridem trailer)
- (2) A Train Double – Nine Axles
- (3) B Train Double – Eight Axles

It was also agreed that a survey of policies and practices would be undertaken regarding the requirement for use of Escort Vehicles for long vehicles and/or loads.

6. Presentation: Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada

Mr. Parker provided an overview of the research being conducted by FERIC on means to improve the roll stability of truck-full trailer configurations used in the logging industry (Attachment 4). He noted that introducing roll coupling between the truck and the trailer through use of a fifth wheel hitch showed promising results. He also reported that developments in electronic control systems were also very promising as means to prevent rollovers through computer controlled braking (EBS).

In discussion, participants expressed interest in FERIC's work and the results obtained to date. While no direction was provided on which avenue should be pursued further, concerns were raised with the ability of sophisticated electronic systems to withstand the tough operating environment faced by logging trucks.

7. Oversize and Overweight Special Permits

a) Standards for Escort Vehicles

Mr. Moroz reported that changes were being considered in Alberta regarding the requirement for escort vehicles for overlength vehicles. He noted that the present requirements are inconsistent, where an escort is not required if a vehicle is 30.5 m long (100 ft), but are required if the load is that length. He indicated that a change was being proposed that would require escorts if either the vehicle or the load is over 34 metres long (111.5 ft), or if the effective rear overhang is greater than 6.5 metres.

In discussion, the policies and practices of jurisdictions were compared. In view of the wide range of practices and thresholds, it was agreed that a survey of policies within the region would be conducted. Mr. Delaney noted that there was work being done in this area by the BC Best Practices Board, and indicated that he would provide contact information for this group.

b) Drilling Rigs

Mr. Moroz reported on changes that were being made in the special permit provisions for movement of oil rig equipment in Alberta. He noted that Alberta's permit system requires detailed information on both the vehicle and the load, and that movement of an oil rig can often require up to 20 components to be transported. Under current permit requirements, carriers must call in to obtain a permits which identifies both the vehicle and the component that it will be transporting.

To reduce the "peak load" on the permitting system this causes, Alberta will be introducing a system which provides a window of time to move the rig and an envelope of permits to transport the

components. The details of which vehicle moved which component can then be filled in after the move is complete.

c) Manufacturer's Ratings – Axle and Gross Vehicle Weight

Mr. Pearson raised this issue on behalf of Mnaitoba, noting the concern with ensuring that the manufacturers axle or vehicle ratings are not exceeded under regular operation, or under special permit operations for overweight loads. He noted that this had been raised in the past, and that there may be liability implications for jurisdictions.

In discussion, it was noted that the regulations in BC, AB, SK and YK were largely silent on this issue, with the exception of allowable weights on steering axles.

Mr. Moroz reported that a study had been done in Alberta on the issue. He reported that there was no evidence in the accident database which indicated that they had been failures of vehicle components due to overloading. He noted that the study had concluded that strict adherence to manufacturer's ratings would require additional trips to move commodities and overweight loads, with the likely result there would be an increase in accidents involving trucks due to increased exposure.

d) Western Regional Permitting System

Mr. Moroz reported that Alberta's on-line permit system was working very well, and was currently being reviewed and considered for implementation in British Columbia. He noted that adoption of the system throughout the western region would provide a number of benefits, including redundancy or "back-up" if there are computer server problems in one province.

Mr. Elliot reported that BC was very interested in the Alberta system, and would be implementing an on-line permit system in the near future.

8. Tridem Drive Tractors

Mr. Moroz reported that Alberta would be introducing regulations respecting the use of tridem drive tractors, thereby moving away from the current special permit program. A draft of the proposed regulation was circulated (Attachment 5).

In discussion it was noted that there remains a requirement to use wide track drive axles on tridem drive tractors.

9. Transportation of Hay Bales

It was noted that the western regional MOU on special permit conditions for movement of hay bales included a section on cargo securement requirements. With adoption of the North American Cargo Securement Standard, it was agreed that the cargo securement provisions in the MOU should be consistent with the new standard.

Mr. Pearson noted that the North American Standard did not explicitly address securement of hay bales, but that work was being done to develop and propose inclusion of a new section for this commodity.

10. Other Issues

a) Pin-Up Axles

Mr. Moroz reported that "pin up" and lift axles are not recognized in Alberta, even if the axles are in contact with the road. He noted that the only exception is for the "empty-assist" device that ensures that axles can only be lifted when the trailer is empty (Attachment 6). In discussion it was noted that

the national standards do not prohibit the use of lift axles, and that a clarification was added to the Appendix E of the MOU in 1997 as follows:

All Categories - Vehicles Fitted with Lifiable Axles (June 1997) -

It is understood that vehicles which are fitted with liftable axles will be recognized as meeting the requirements of this Memorandum of Understanding provided that, when the lift axles are raised, all other requirements are met.

It is further understood that participating jurisdictions can chose to eliminate any liftable axles from the determination of axle and/or gross vehicle weight limits for a vehicle.

In concluding the discussion on this subject, **it was agreed by motion** (Elliot/Warkentin) that axles which are not fitted with a lift mechanism, but which can be chained or pinned up should be recognized for weight when in contact with the ground.

b) Super Single Tires

It was noted that Michelin continued to press for changes to the weight limit applicable to single tires for the new generation, wide based design, and had provided the Task Force with additional test results from Virginia. Mr. Moroz reported that there remained concerns with the implications of single tires for pavement damage, and that a test program was planned for Alberta in the summer.

c) Escort Vehicle Driver Training

Mr. Pearson reported that there had been no new progress to report on this issue since the last meeting. He noted that government representatives had indicated a preference for providing guidance on the role and responsibilities of escort vehicles and their drivers, rather than introducing mandatory requirements for driver training and certification.

Mr. Delaney reported that this was a major concern for the petroleum industry, and that PSAC would be proceeding with development of training programs for escort vehicle drivers working in support of this sector.

It was agreed that the draft manual which had been prepared (based on Alberta's manual) would be circulated for review and comment.

d) Wide Spread Tandem Axle Groups

Policies respecting the use of tandem axle groups with spreads greater than 1.85 metres were reviewed:

BC: tandem groups with spreads in excess of 1.85 m are allowed only single axle weights (9100 kg) except if used under permit for movement of indivisible loads, in which case 18,000 kg is permitted

AB: tandem groups with spreads in excess of 1.85 m are allowed only single axle weights (9100 kg) except for specialty trailers (eg. Mobile television studios, car race trailers etc) which are allowed tandem weights

SK: tandem groups with spreads in excess of 1.85 m are allowed only single axle weights (9100 kg)

YK: tandem groups with spreads in excess of 1.85 m are allowed full tandem weights (up to 19,100 kg on 10 ft spread)

NT: tandem groups with spreads in excess of 1.85 m are allowed only single axle weights (9100 kg) except for specialty trailers

11. Adjournment

There no further business, members were thanked for their participation, and the meeting was adjourned.

Secretary: John Pearson

Date Distributed: March 16, 2005

Attachments:

1. List of Participants
2. Presentation: Vehicle Weights and Dimensions in Canada
3. Presentation: Truck Size and Weight Limits in Alaska
4. Presentation: Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada
5. Alberta Proposed Regulations for Tridem Drive Trucks
6. Alberta Policy on Axle Lift Device

Attachment 1: Participants

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