Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety

Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy

Minutes

(Draft December 29, 2005)

Date: November 30, 2005
Location: Wyndham Bristol Place Hotel, Toronto
Chair: John Pearson
In Attendance: (See Attachment 1)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. Pearson opened the meeting and welcomed participants. He provided a brief overview of the role of the Task Force, noting that the primary focus is on improving the national consistency of regulations and policies which affect vehicle weights and dimensions.

He indicated that "national standards" are contained in a Memorandum of Understanding first endorsed in 1988 by all provinces, territories and the federal government. He noted that the Task Force reports to the Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety, and can make recommendations to the Council on changes or additions to the MOU standards to promote consistency, safety, and productivity. He explained that, where there is consensus on proposed changes, these are carried forward to the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety for consideration as amendments to the MOU. He noted that, since 1988, amendments have been endorsed in 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2004.

Mr. Pearson noted that the Task Force meetings are structured as open forums for discussion, and to provide an opportunity to identify concerns, discuss new technologies, and consider proposals for changes to the national standards. With regard to process and decision making, he suggested it was important to recognize that:

- provincial and territorial legislation and regulations govern vehicle weights and dimensions in Canada
- each jurisdiction is represented on the Task Force, and a report on the meeting's discussions will be provided to the Council of Deputy Ministers
- in most cases, decisions on proposals for changes in standards cannot be taken by the Task Force at the meeting, and will require consideration by each government individually, and collectively by the Council.

He noted that it is both helpful and important to understand and convey the reactions and positions of stakeholders on any proposals being considered.

2. Round Table Introductions and Adoption of the Agenda

Following round table introductions, Mr. Pearson drew attention to the agenda that had been circulated prior to the meeting, and invited comments or additions. There being none, the agenda was adopted.

3. Vehicle Weight and Dimension Regulations in Canada - Update on Issues and Developments

a) National MOU on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions

Mr. Pearson noted that in September 2004 the Council of Ministers had endorsed the following amendments to the national standards in the MOU:

- The box length limit for A Train Doubles was increased to 20 metres (from 18.5m)
- A kingpin setback limit of a maximum 2.0 m radius applies to the second semitrailer in B Train double trailer combinations
- The Intercity Bus category was amended to include recreational vehicles, thereby allowing them to be up to 13.7 metres long, provided all other weight and dimension limits and controls for the category are respected

He noted that provinces and territories were taking steps necessary to accommodate these changes.

b) Provincial and Territorial Developments

In round table review the following reports were provided:

Manitoba

Mr. Catteeuw reported that changes were being introduced in Manitoba to accommodate lift axles and tridem drive tractors. He noted that the MOU changes affecting RV's were being accommodated by special permit.

Alberta

Mr. Moroz reported that regulatory changes were being introduced to address the changes in weight and dimension limits for RV's, and that the tridem drive configurations were being adopted in regulation.

Saskatchewan

Mr. Cipywnyk reported that tridem drive configurations were being accommodated under special permits. He noted that a policy on lift axles was being developed (for empty configurations only), as well as use of tag axles. He also noted that the inside wheels (on duals) are being removed by carriers on some configurations, and asked for advice on this practice.

Nova Scotia

Mr. Stonehouse noted that efforts to accommodate the 2004 MOU changes were underway. He also reported that assessments were being undertaken of tridem drive tractors, quad axle semitrailers and Longer Combination Vehicles.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Mr. Griffin reported that changes to accommodate the 2004 MOU amendments were under development.

British Columbia

Mr. Elliot reported that the 2004 MOU amendments were being adopted. He noted that use of "empty assist" axles (which can be lifted on empty vehicles only) was also being accommodated, and noted that an assessment was underway of a tridem drive straight truck – quad axle trailer configuration.

New Brunswick
Ms. Lynch reported that an operational evaluation of LCV's (twin 53' trailers) was underway, which would continue until April 2006. She noted that grandfathering provisions were coming into effect as part of implementation of the Atlantic agreement on uniform regulations. She also reported the installation of high speed Weigh in Motion scales in NB that were expected to provide $600,000 in savings annually to the trucking industry.

Québec:
Mr. Janelle reported on developments, noting that changes were planned for 2006 regarding the special permit provisions for LCV's, and overweight and oversize loads. He noted that grandfather provisions for wide spread tridems were also being introduced.

Ontario
Mr. Madill provided an update on developments in Ontario, and provided a presentation on Phase 3 of the Weight Reform Project (Attachment 2).

c) Open Discussion

National Weight Limits- B Trains and Tridem Groups
In discussion, Mr. Sokil suggested that consideration should be given to increasing the weight limit on B Trains to 63,500 kg nationally, noting that this limit was already in place in BC, AB and ON. He also proposed that the weight limit on medium spread tridems be increased to 24,000 kg, as this had already been adopted in most provinces except SK and MB. Mr. Albrechtson expressed support for these proposals, suggesting that a focus on economic competitiveness and efficiency was critically important.

Quad Axle Semitrailers in Atlantic Canada
Mr. Seeley proposed that the conditions for use of quad axle semitrailers developed by ON and QC should be adopted by the Atlantic provinces as well.

LCV's in Ontario
In response to questions, Mr. Madill indicated that there were no new developments to report on regarding potential for use of LCV's in Ontario.

4. New Generation Wide Based Single Tires

Mr. Beaveridge (Michelin) provided a presentation (Attachment 3) on the operational, safety and environmental benefits associated with the new generation single tire.

In discussion, Mr. Beaveridge offered comments on questions posed:
- Impacts of tire pressure changes: He noted that the size of, and weight distribution within, the contact patch is less sensitive to tire pressure changes on single tires than with duals
- Tire Blow out and Stability: He reported that testing had shown no major problems with stability of vehicles in cases of tire blow out.
- Scuffing of pavements: He indicated that there are some applications where use of the new generation single tire is not recommended (eg. self steering axles on trailers)

Mr. Montague suggested that national harmonization of weight limits for this new technology tire was a critical national issue. Mr. Seeley proposed that all jurisdictions adopt a weight limit of 9000 kg for axles fitted with these tires, in view of the significant benefits for fuel efficiency, the environment and economic competitiveness. Mr. Dolyniuk urged all jurisdictions to move together

on this issue, as there would be competitive disadvantages if some move to higher weights while others don't.

Mr. Pearson reported that there remained concerns among highway agencies on the impacts that these new tires could have for pavement deterioration and increased maintenance costs. He noted that Alberta and Ontario had indicated that further testing of the tires was planned for the spring of 2006. He also reported that the Council of Deputy Ministers Engineering and Research Support Committee (comprising the Chief Engineers from the provincial and territorial highway departments) would be reviewing the available research on pavement impacts to identify any outstanding concerns which should be addressed through further research or testing.

He proposed that a steering committee be formed to guide the discussion and any additional research required to achieve national consensus. It was agreed that this approach would be followed, with participation on the Steering Committee open to any interested parties.

Action: Task Force

5. Unimog Vocational Vehicles

Mr. Sheridan from Unimog Canada provided a presentation on the Unimog vocational vehicle, noting that it is uniquely designed to work in both off road environments and on public highways. He pointed to problems being faced in complying with the single tire weight limits in several provinces, because of the design of the vehicle and the need to use special tires suited to both off road and highway usage. He proposed that consideration be given to recognizing the Unimog as a special category of vehicle, with weight limits which would accommodate the unique characteristics of the specialized and limited use vehicle.

In discussion, Mr. Sheridan indicated that he was not aware of testing of the impacts on pavements of the specialized tires used on the Unimog. In concluding the discussion, Mr. Sheridan was thanked for the presentation, and jurisdictional representatives agreed to consider the proposal.

Action: Jurisdictional representatives

6. Saddlemount Configurations

Ms. Pawlich introduced the representatives from Active Transportation/JHT Holdings, and a presentation was provided on changes that had been introduced in the United States regarding the overall length allowed for movement of saddlemount configurations (Attachment 4).

It was proposed that Canadian jurisdictions consider harmonizing their regulations or permit conditions with the new US conditions to support free trade and economic competitiveness. It was reported that Mr. John Billing had been retained to assess the stability and control characteristics of saddlemount configurations meeting the new overall length limit (97 ft), and the results of this work would be made available in the near future.

Ms. Pawlich indicated that additional information on the proposal and its implications would be provided to jurisdictions for consideration shortly.

Action: C. Pawlich
Active Transportation
Jurisdictional representatives

7. Stinger Steer Truck Trailer Configurations

Mr. Tschirhart (CTEA) provided a presentation on the use of stinger steer truck trailer configurations for the transportation of boats (Attachment 5). He proposed that the special permit conditions available for transportation of cars and light trucks in this configuration be extended to include transportation of boats, as is the case in the United States.

In discussion it was noted that extendable bumpers are typically used on this configuration to help protect against rear under-ride. It was agreed that jurisdictions would consider this proposal with a view to developing national consistency.

Action: Jurisdictional representatives

8. Lift Trucks on Rear of Trucks and Trailers

Mr. Palumbo provided an overview of the characteristics of lift trucks that are designed to attach to the rear of trucks and semitrailers. He noted that the regulations appeared to vary from one province to the next regarding whether the extension in length caused by the lift truck is included in measurement of effective rear overhang, and asked for clarification. In round table review the following practices were reported:

	Exempt	***Comments***
BC	No	Special permit available
AB		Additional 1.5 m allowed
SK	No	Must meet 35% Effective Rear Overhang (EFO)
MB	Yes	
ON	No	Must meet 35% ERO
QC	No	Special permit available (42% of wheelbase if the width of lift is less than 2.1 m)
NB	No	Must meet 35% ERO
NS	No	Must meet 35% ERO
PEI	Absent	
NL	No	Must meet 35% ERO
YK	Absent	
NT	Absent	

In discussion, it was proposed that uniformity in practice, signing and marking would be beneficial. Concerns were also raised with lack of under-ride protection when such equipment is mounted on the rear of vehicles.

Action: Task Force

9. Tractor Wheelbase Limits

Mr. Pearson noted that concerns had been raised earlier in the year regarding the feasibility of complying with a maximum tractor wheelbase limit of 6.2 m because of the need to accommodate additional equipment on tractors to comply with new emissions standards. He also noted that Quebec had introduced a special permit program which would allow tractor wheelbases up to 7.2 metres, provided the overall length limit was respected and the wheelbase of the semitrailer was reduced in accordance with a prescribed formula.

General support was expressed for the approach taken by Quebec, and it was proposed that all jurisdictions consider adoption of similar permit programs.

The relationship between tractor and semitrailer wheelbases under this program is as follows:

Tractor Wheelbase (m)	Max Trailer Wheelbase (m)	Tractor Wheelbase (m)	Max Trailer Wheelbase (m)
6.2	12.5	6.8	12.1
6.3	12.5	6.9	12.1
6.4	12.4	7.0	12.0
6.5	12.3	7.1	11.9
6.6	12.3	7.2	11.9
6.7	12.2		

10. Trailer Wheelbase Limits

It was noted that a proposal had been advanced in December 2003 to adopt a maximum wheelbase limit of 14.2 metres for lowbed and drop deck trailers (the MOU standard of 12.5 m is too restrictive for this type of trailer). In round table review the following practices were reported:

	Adopted 14.2 m	***Other***
BC	-	Up to 15.25 m under permit
AB	-	Up to 15.25 m
SK	No	Up to 13.25 m
MB	No	
ON	No	Exempt - addressed through annual permits
QC	No	Only available for semitrailers with removable goose neck
NB	No	Addressed by permit
NS	No	Need solution which respects performance
PEI	Absent	
NL	No	Would consider options
YK	Absent	
NT	Absent	

Mr. Dolyniuk proposed, and it was agreed, that a working group would be formed to develop a proposal for harmonization of policies and practices in this area.

Action: Working Group

11. Tridem Drive Tractors

In discussion it was noted that tridem drive tractors and trucks are growing in usage in western Canada. It was agreed that national standards for this configuration would be beneficial, in part to ensure that equipment designed and suitable for use in one jurisdiction could be used in others, even if the weight limits are not uniform.

It was agreed that a proposal be developed and distributed for comments.

Action: Secretary

12. Manufacturers Axle and Vehicle Weight Ratings

Mr. Catteeuw introduced this item, noting that Manitoba's regulations include provision that manufacturers axle and vehicle weight ratings cannot be exceeded. He acknowledged that this provision has not been rigourously enforced to date, but suggested that there were inherent liability

issues and possible safety concerns if vehicles are found to be loaded beyond manufacturers rated capacities.

In discussion, it was generally agreed that, as a matter of principle, manufacturers ratings should not be exceeded. Ms. Lessard commented that ratings are usually based on the "weakest link" in the system, and that it is often possible to increase axle or vehicle ratings by changing one or two key components. Mr. Peddle commented that exceeding manufacturer's rating would be a potentially serious liability issue for carriers as well.

It was also noted that many jurisdictions require carriers to provide proof of vehicle and axle capacity as part of the application process for overweight special permits.

In round table review of current policies, the following responses were provided:

	Regulations reference Manufacturers ratings	***Comments***
BC	Yes	
AB	No	
SK	No	
MB	Yes	Not enforced at present
ON	Yes/No	Only applies to SPIF vehicles, not for other vehicle configurations
QC	No	
NB	Yes	
NS	Yes	Extent of enforcement uncertain
PEI	Absent	
NL	Yes	Enforced for past four years
YK	Absent	
NT	Absent	

13. North American Security and Prosperity Partnership

Mr. Harbour provided a brief report on developments with the North American Security and Prosperity Partnership, and the potential opportunities for harmonization of trucking related regulations. He drew attention to the document which had been circulated with the agenda, and strongly encouraged participants to provide any comments on issues which should be included on the agenda for discussion with the United States and Mexico.

Action: All participants

14. Other Business

No additional items of business were proposed.

15. Next Meeting

Mr. Pearson noted that meetings of the Task Force have generally been scheduled when there have been new developments, expressions of interest and a substantive agenda. He noted that in the recent past, meetings have been held about every two years, and invited comments the worth of the meetings and their frequency.

In discussion, there were strong expressions of support for meetings of the Task Force, with a proposal that there be at least one meeting per year, or more frequently if issues warrant. It was also suggested that having advance notice of the meeting would assist in planning and allow issues to be more fully developed for discussion. It was generally agreed that a fall meeting in a central location would be the preferred option.

For planning purposes, it was agreed that plans would be made for a meeting in November 2006 in Montreal.

16. Adjournment

There being no further business, participants were thanked for their contributions to a productive meeting.

Secretary: John Pearson

Date Distributed: December 30, 2005

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 - List of Participants
Attachment 2 - Presentation: Ontario Vehicle Weight and Dimension Reforms
Attachment 3 - Presentation: Michelin New Generation Single Tires
Attachment 4 - Presentation: Saddlemount Configurations
Attachment 5 - Presentation: CTEA Stinger Steer Configurations

Attachment 1:

Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy
Meeting – November 30, 2005 Toronto

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