



Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety

Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy

Minutes

Date: June 28, 1999
Location: Mississauga Room,
Airport Hilton Hotel, Toronto
Chair: Emile DiSanza (Transport Canada)
Secretary: J. Pearson
In Attendance: (See Attachment 1)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. DiSanza called the meeting to order and welcomed participants to Toronto. He indicated that he had been asked to chair the meeting on behalf of Mr. André Trudeau, Deputy Minister from Transport Québec and Chairman of the Task Force, and conveyed Mr. Trudeau's regrets at being unable to attend.

Mr. Disanza noted that the last national meeting had been held in Montreal in February 1998, which had resulted in prioritization of recommendations for changes to the national MOU on VW&D standards. He reported that these recommendations had been presented to the Council of Ministers at its meeting in Edmonton in May '98. He reported that no decisions had been taken by the Council in May 1998, in deference to the bilateral discussions on related issues which were taking place between Québec and Ontario at the time.

He noted that productive Task Force discussions have been continuing on regional bases since that time, principally on issues related to standardization of special permit authorities and conditions.

He indicated that the objectives of the meeting were primarily on information exchange on the status of ongoing regulatory harmonization discussions at the international, national and regional levels. He noted in particular that the opportunity was being taken to review the work being done within the NAFTA Land Transport Standards Subcommittee.

Mr. Disanza then called upon Mr. Mitchell Toker, Director, Policy Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation for opening remarks. Mr. Toker welcomed participants to Toronto and to the meeting. He indicated that Ontario supports the work of the Task Force and the pursuit of common standards. He noted, however, that flexibility is needed within Ontario to address local, provincial and regional needs, and to pursue greater compatibility with major trading partners in the United States. He reported that considerable effort had been expended on vehicle weight and dimension policy issues by his branch over the past year, accompanied by an extensive consultation process with stakeholders. He indicated that the outcome of this work would be presented later in the agenda.

Following the opening remarks, *the agenda was adopted by motion* (Robinson/Couture).

2. Round Table Introductions

Mr. DiSanza called for round table introductions from all participants (Attachment 1)

3. Minutes of Meeting - February 1998

The minutes of the meeting held in Montreal in February 1998 were adopted by motion (Couture/MacDonald).

4. Business Arising from February 1998 Meeting:

a) *Status of Amendments to the National Standards (MOU)*

Mr. Pearson noted that nine changes to the national standards of the MOU had been endorsed by the Council of Ministers at its meeting in June 1997, for implementation by jurisdictions by July 1, 1998. He reported that all jurisdictions had taken steps to accommodate these changes, either through regulatory changes or by making special permits available.

In discussion Mr. Nix commented that the changes which had been introduced in Ontario with respect to "invisible" lift axles were more restrictive than the principle which had been endorsed by the committee for incorporation in the MOU. Mr. Taylor commented that Ontario had introduced changes which were designed to address the specific request which had been raised by industry to allow one additional axle on a B Train double. He noted that a further change had recently been introduced to allow up to two additional axles on B Trains, again at the request of industry. Mr. Taylor indicated that his ministry remained open to consideration of other requests from industry to use additional "invisible" axles on specific vehicle configurations, as need arises.

In concluding this discussion, it was agreed that a note be included in the next report to the Council of Deputy Ministers on the confusion which has arisen regarding Ontario's approach to implementation of this change to the MOU.

b) *Status of Ontario/Quebec Discussions*

Mr. Couture reported that a productive dialogue had been occurring between officials from Ontario and Québec on weight and dimension compatibility issues through last spring and summer. He noted, however, that elections had intervened in both jurisdictions in the past year, which coupled with changes in Ministers and staffing in both provinces had slowed progress. He commented that he remained hopeful and positive that the progress would be made on these issues in the near future.

Mr. Taylor commented that work has been continuing within his ministry in considering policy options, working closely with industry and with the ministry staff responsible for highway infrastructure and for highway safety.

In discussion, Mr. Sokil asked when resolution of the issues could be expected, commenting that the rest of the country had been waiting for Ontario to take positions on the proposed changes to the MOU for the past two years.

c) *Status - Western Regional Harmonization*

Mr. Gilks provided a brief review of the status of discussions in pursuit of western regional special permit uniformity. He noted that two meetings had been held since last spring, with specific focus on needs of the heavy haul industry and on movement of hay bales. He reported that stakeholders had proposed establishing a network of corridors to expedite movement of heavy loads, a concept which is currently being explored by the western jurisdictions. He reported that the next western regional meeting was being planned for early September.

d) *Status - Eastern Regional Harmonization*

Mr. Pearson provided a brief status report on discussions taking place within eastern Canada. He noted that a discussion paper on achieving uniformity of weight and dimension regulations within

Atlantic Canada was being prepared, potentially as a basis for consultation with stakeholders. He also reported that a proposal on standardization of special permit requirements for movement of overdimensional loads was also nearing completion.

5. Presentation - Possible VW&D Regulatory Changes in Ontario

Mr. Taylor provided a presentation on the work which had been undertaken by his ministry over the past year (Attachment 2). He reviewed the issues under consideration, the analyses which had been done and the objectives which had been adopted for assessing potential changes.

He reported that special permits were now being made available to qualified carriers to operate 53' trailers with a specific configuration of quad-axle configuration (eg. self-steering axle; load equalization etc).

He then reviewed the additional changes which had been proposed and which were currently under consideration within the ministry. These proposals included:

- Gradual phasing out of existing triaxle configurations, to be replaced by either tridems or new triaxles equipped with self-steering axles.
- Phased in revisions to the regulated weight limits for tandem axle groups
- Phased in revisions to the regulated weight limits for tridem axle groups

In discussion, Mr. Taylor reported that implementation of changes being contemplated would likely require legislative amendments in Ontario. With respect to possible timing, he noted that the legislature would not be reconvening until after Thanksgiving, and consequently the earliest implementation opportunity would be in the fall of 1999. In this regard he indicated that, if approved, the changes may not occur until next year.

With respect to the requirement for self-steering axles on quad axle groups, Mr. Begin inquired whether manufacturers would be provided an opportunity to discuss the technical details with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. Mr. Taylor indicated that he would be pleased to discuss these issues after the meeting.

Mr. Robert commented that he wanted to support the initiatives proposed by Ontario, but was not comfortable with the protracted implementation period being proposed. He urged that consideration be given to implementing all changes immediately, thereby giving a clear message to carriers on which equipment to purchase. He expressed concern with the prospect of facing payload disadvantages with newer, safer equipment while old equipment with higher payloads continues to operate over a long transition period.

These concerns were echoed by Mr. Vuillemot, noting that shippers need a clear message today on what equipment is to be available now and in the future.

In concluding this discussion, Mr. Taylor agreed to keep the membership informed of developments as information becomes available.

6. NAFTA Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee

a. Introduction & Overview

Mr. Disanza provided a brief overview of the mandate and structure of the Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee which was established when NAFTA was endorsed in 1995. He noted that while participation in LTSS committee discussions had, to date, been restricted to government officials, the opportunity had been provided to other interested parties and stakeholders to submit

perspectives or comments to each of the annual plenary sessions. He drew attention to the report on the 1998 Plenary Session held in Montreal, and invited participants to take copies.

b. LTSS Subgroup 2 - Vehicle Weights and Dimensions

Mr. Disanza provided an overview of the mandate of LTSS Working Group 2, and reviewed the work which had been undertaken by the committee since 1995. He noted that the early efforts of the committee had focused on exchange of information on the policies, procedures and regulations related to vehicle weights and dimensions in each country. He noted that a comprehensive comparison of federal, state and provincial/territorial regulations had been assembled for a range of different vehicle configurations.

He drew attention to a report issued by the committee in June 1998 entitled "Harmonization of Vehicle Weight and Dimension Regulations within the NAFTA Partnership", which included discussion of a proposed strategy (copies distributed). He also drew attention to a resolution which had been endorsed by LTSS in June 1998 regarding harmonization of VW&D policies, accompanied by a workplan to pursue safety performance criteria as a potential basis for regulatory harmonization.

He reported that work had begun on the project to develop candidate performance criteria in the summer of 1998. He noted that a summary report on the subject had been completed by the committee (copies distributed), and that a further report with recommendations on specific criteria and acceptable performance thresholds was expected to be completed later this year.

c. Presentation - Performance Criteria as Components of Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policies

Mr. Pearson provided an overview presentation of the report completed by the committee on performance criteria. He noted that performance criteria had been adopted in Canada in the late 1980's as underlying components of the national standards for vehicle weights and dimensions contained in the MOU. He suggested that achieving agreement within NAFTA on aspects of vehicle performance which are critical concerns in size and weight policy, and on specific thresholds of acceptability for each, would provide a sound foundation for addressing greater compatibility of regulations. He also noted that agreement on standard definitions for key elements of size and weight policy (eg. height, width, length etc) would have to be included in these discussions.

d. Discussion - Potential Application of Performance Criteria

Mr. Disanza indicated that the second report of the project committee was expected to be tabled at the next NAFTA Plenary Session in October. He noted that comments on the work completed to date or on the approach being pursued would be welcomed.

Mr. Montague commented that there appeared to be little prospect of achieving greater uniformity of regulations between Canada and the United States, and questioned the value of continued discussions. He suggested that the biggest regulatory impediments to efficient international trade might better be addressed on regional bases; for example between Ontario and Michigan.

Mr Disanza noted that, within the overriding framework of establishing safety performance criteria, the NAFTA committee had also recognized a need to consider means of supporting harmonization discussions on regional bases, and that steps were being taken to propose a strategy and framework for such discussions.

7. US Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study

a. Overview Presentation

Mr. Nix provided a brief overview presentation on the recently released "Volume 3" of the US Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study. He noted that the study did not include recommendations for changes in policy, but had been designed to develop analysis tools for use in assessing the impacts of potential changes. He reviewed the example scenarios which had been included in Volume 3, along with the impacts of each as predicted by the analysis tools.

b. Status and Outstanding Issues

Mr. Pearson noted that FHWA was in the process of completing the final Volume of the study, which would be a guide to the documentation produced and reported in Volumes 1 to 3. He noted that the report would be provided to Congress before the end of the year.

It was also noted that as a result of the TEA 21 Bill, the Transportation Research Board had been asked to form a committee to consider potential changes to federal truck size and weight policy, and to make recommendations to Congress within the next two years.

Mr. Robert commented that there were a host of policy issues which needed to be addressed by Canada and the United States which extend beyond size and weight limits. He acknowledged the conflicts in state and provincial regulations which apply to 53' semitrailers, and also pointed to the wide ranging differences in taxation policies.

8. Special Permit Issues

a. Stinger Steer Auto Carriers

Mr. Pearson provided a report and presentation on the permit conditions which had been developed in 1998 by the Task Force for stinger steer auto carriers. He noted that these had been designed primarily to improve the compatibility of permit conditions with those in the United States, while ensuring that the performance criteria of the MOU were respected. He noted that two concerns had arisen over the past year relating to the potential for rear swingout of the vehicle or load during turning. To address these concerns Mr. Pearson proposed two amendments to the permit conditions as follows:

- the effective rear overhang on the truck-tractor be limited to 4 m when empty and to 4.6 m when loaded
- the additional 1.2 m overhang available at the rear of the semitrailer be restricted to overhanging cargo only and would not be available for trailer structure

In discussion the proposed changes *were endorsed by motion* (Goguen/Robinson), on the condition that further consultation with the auto carrier industry be carried out.

b. Escort Vehicle Driver Training and Certification

Mr. Pearson introduced this subject, noting that initial efforts had been taken in 1997 to develop a standard training curriculum and certification process for drivers of escort vehicles. He noted that a draft proposal based on the program in New York state had been developed, but that no action had been taken to date. He asked for comments on the importance of this issue and for direction on whether it should be dropped from the agenda.

In discussion, strong support was expressed for developing and implementing a training and certification program for escort vehicle drivers. While some members suggested that this issue should be referred to the Drivers and Vehicles committee of CCMTA, others felt that it must remain within the purview of the Task Force, as the requirements must be closely tied to the special permit

conditions. *It was agreed* that a further review of the issue would be carried out to develop an appropriate course of action:

- Mr. Goguen agreed to review and report on the status of work undertaken in New Brunswick
Action: Goguen
- Mr. Pearson agreed to discuss the proposal with CCMTA to determine whether a joint effort could be launched
Action: Pearson
- Mr. Pearson would recirculate the last draft of the proposed training package to members for comment

Action: Pearson, All members

c. Signing and Marking of Overdimensional Vehicles

Mr. Pearson drew attention to the proposed standards for signing, marking and lighting of overdimensional vehicles/loads. He noted that there appeared to be general support for the proposed standards in all areas except the requirements for escort vehicles.

It was proposed that references to the number and location of escort vehicles be removed from the proposal, but that the specification of the escort vehicle itself be retained. It was also proposed that footnote 6 regarding the need for a red light on tree length logs and wood utility poles be removed (ie. a red light would be required on any commodity with a rear load overhang in excess of 2 metres). With these changes the proposed standards *were endorsed by motion* (MacDonald/Couture).

9. Development of Uniform Definitions

Mr. Pearson provided a brief presentation on this item, noting that a number of regulatory conflicts within Canada and between Canada and the US appeared to have their origins in differences in definitions. He suggested that adoption of common definitions for key dimensional controls could resolve such conflicts. As example, he noted that some jurisdictions do not include specific parts or accessories in width or length measurements, while others do, thereby creating compliance difficulties for both equipment manufacturers and carriers.

In discussion, strong support for establishing common definitions was expressed. However, two different approaches were suggested:

- some members advocated establishing length, width and height limits based on common definitions, but with listings of vehicle or load components which should be excluded from the measurement
- others felt that standard definitions and limits should be adopted based on performance criteria or sound technical principles, with no exemptions or exclusions from the limits

There was considerable debate on a number of issues, particularly with respect to the types of safety or cargo securement devices which should be included or excluded in length and/or width measurements. While there appeared to be general support for the principle that a vehicle should comply with the regulated dimension limits when not loaded with cargo (ie. all permanent structures or components should remain within the envelope), a wide range of possible exclusions from measurement were suggested, with improving vehicle safety most often cited as justification. Nonetheless, *it was agreed* that resolution of differences in definitions should be accorded a high priority.

With respect to the proposed definitions, *it was agreed* that:

- the overall width definition should be based on a limit of 2.6 metres, accompanied by a listing of specific items which are to be excluded from measurement of width, provided they fall within a 10 cm window on either side of the vehicle
- the proposals should be circulated for comment and, if necessary, revisions prepared to address the comments received

Action: All members

Mr. Begin asked whether a comparison of state and provincial definitions was available or could be easily compiled. Mr. Pearson agreed to investigate and report back to the committee.

Action: Secretary

10. Equipment Related Issues

a. Tridem Drive Tractors

Mr. Billing provided a brief presentation on the research and testing which had been done on tridem drive tractor applications in western Canada. He noted that FERIC had been working with the highway agencies in Alberta and B.C. to develop tridem drive configurations for the logging industry. He concluded his presentation with a review of the factors which are well understood, as a result of completed research, and other areas where additional research may be warranted.

In discussion it was noted that interest in tridem drive applications was growing on a national basis. It was agreed that there would be merit in considering development of common requirements for tridem drive tractors for operation under special permit.

Mr. Oldridge reported that additional research was being planned in BC under industry sponsorship, and offered to make the results available to the Task Force as soon as it becomes available.

Action: Oldridge

b. Steering Axle Weight Limits

Mr. Robinson drew attention to the submission from WPTA regarding the problems which were being experienced by carriers in complying with a 5500 kg limit on steering axle load for tractors. He requested that consideration be given to increasing the allowable steering axle load to 9100 kg, which would be comparable with the limit applied to straight truck configurations. In discussion it was noted that most eastern jurisdictions allow the steering axle load on tractors to exceed 5500 kg but base the regulated Gross Vehicle Weight on 5500 kg.

It was agreed that western jurisdictions would review the submission from WPTA and consider options for possible changes. It was further agreed that a response to WPTA would be provided by the Secretary based on comments from the jurisdictional representatives.

Action: Jurisdictional Representatives, Secretary

c. Box Length Limit on B Trains

Mr. Albrechtsen asked that consideration be given to increasing the box length limit on B trains to allow both trailers to be equipped with tridem axle groups. He explained that an increase to 21.5 m would be required to enable two tridem axle groups to be employed and to respect the 6 m minimum interaxle spacing.

In discussion it was noted that an increase in box length without an increase in overall length would once again raise the question of whether the remaining 3.5 m window left for a tractor would be adequate. It was noted that when the overall length limit was 23 m and the box length was 20 m,

industry had argued that the 3 m window available to fit a tractor was not adequate and potentially unsafe.

Mr. Disanza asked that a written proposal be provided by Mr. Albrechtsen to the secretary for review by the jurisdictional representatives.

Action: Albrechtsen

11. Subcommittee on Intercity Bus Weight and Dimension Issues

Mr. Oldridge gave a brief status report on this item, noting that discussions with the bus manufacturing and operating industries had been initiated in 1997 to address concerns with respect to compliance with regulated tire and axle load limits. He noted that the next meeting would likely occur in early September.

12. Dimension Limits for Recreational Vehicles

Mr. Hamm from the Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association reviewed his submission regarding concerns of his industry with weight and dimension limits. He noted that the RV industry is anxious to comply with all regulatory requirements, but are experiencing difficulties with differences in regulations between Canada and the United States. He noted that while there may be arguments raised on technical issues, the consequences of different policies can have detrimental impacts on tourism. As indicated in his submission, Mr. Hamm asked that consideration be given to:

- including awnings in the list of items which are excluded from width measurement
- allowing RV's the same overall length limit as intercity buses (14 m)

He noted that he had presented his requests to the CCMTA Drivers and Vehicles committee, and that support for the proposals had been expressed, provided the Task Force on VW&D Policy was also satisfied. He also reported that the CSA standards for RV's would require amending, which would require support from a minimum of 6 provinces representing over 50% of the population.

In round table review, it was noted that exclusion of awnings from overall width measurement and operation of RV's longer than 40' would not technically be legal in any province. It was noted that RV's are generally not targeted for inspection and hence enforcement of regulated dimension limits would not likely be rigorous.

Mr. Hamm was thanked for his presentation, and it was agreed that the government representatives would review the requests and provide a response through the Secretary.

Action: Jurisdictional Representatives

13. Other Business

a. Floatation Tires

Mr. Gilks raised this issue, asking for assistance from other jurisdictions on policies related to the use of super single and/or floatation tires. He noted that Saskatchewan currently limits the loading on a single tire to a maximum of 3000 kg. Mr. Krumins reported that Alberta had recently developed a policy on floatation tires and offered to circulate it to the committee for review.

Action: Krumins

b. Tractor Wheelbase Limits

Mr. Couture asked for a review of provincial policies with respect to the MOU's 6.2 m limit on tractor wheelbase. A round table review provided the following results:

Newfoundland: 6.2 m limit in place and enforced since 1991

Nova Scotia: currently applies only to A B and C trains, will be introduced for tractor-semitrailers

PEI: 6.2 m limit in place since 1990

New Brunswick: any tractor from model year 1996 or newer must comply, older tractors grandfathered until 2005

Québec: after January 1, 1999 all new tractors must conform

Ontario: tractor wheelbase limit applies if semitrailer is over 48' long or if double trailer combination is over 23 m long (reg 32-94)
Special permits for longer tractors have been issued to Manitoulin Transport

Manitoba: limit in place and enforced; permits issued to grandfathered units

Saskatchewan: enforced since 1988; single trip permits available for longer tractors with short trailers

Alberta: enforced since 1988; long wheelbase tractors older than 1988 are grandfathered for use with pre-1988 length limits

B.C.: enforced since 1988; all tractors coupled to trailers newer than 1988 must comply

14. Adjournment

Mr. DiSanza thanked all participants for attending and for contributing to the discussions.

Secretary: John Pearson

Date Distributed: July 12, 1999

Attachment 1:

**Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy
Meeting - June 28, 1999, Toronto**

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation	Phone	Fax
Imants Krumins	Alberta Infrastructure	(403) 340-5189	(403) 340-5092
Peter Vuillemot	Atlantic Provinces Transportation Comm.	(506) 857-2820	(506) 857-2835
Ralph Boyd	Atlantic Provinces Trucking Assn	(506) 855-2782	(506) 853-7424
G. Allen Tucker	Cdn Transportation Equip. Assn	(519) 631-0414	(519) 631-1333
Fred Nix	Consultant	(519) 941-0225	(519) 941-0225
John Billing	Consultant	(416) 499-3202	(416) 499-2295
Henry Hilliard	Custom Trailer Leasing Inc	(905) 355-5154	(905) 355-5156
Serge Alexandre	Domtar Inc.	(514) 633-0871	(514) 633-0865
Ralph Hutchinson	Hutchinson Industries	(416) 661-9330	(416) 661-9165
Ron Oldridge	Insurance Corp of B.C.	(250) 387-6444	(250) 356-8986
J. Pierre Begin	Manac	(418) 228-2018	(418) 227-2141
Greg Cateeuw	Manitoba Highways and Transportation	(204) 945-3898	(204) 948-2078
Bob Dolyniuk	Manitoba Trucking Association	(204) 632-6600	(204) 694-7134
Greg Bond	Manitoulin Transport	(705) 282-2640	(705) 282-2322
Gervais Corbin	Ministere des Transports du Québec	(418) 644-5593	(418) 644-9072
Jean Couture	Ministere des Transports du Québec	(418) 643-3595	(418) 644-9072
Don Stonehouse	N.S. Dept. of Transportation	(902) 424-6726	(902) 424-1163
Denis Goguen	New Brunswick Dept of Transportation	(506) 453-2802	(506) 453-3701
Kim Durdle	Newfoundland & Labrador	(709) 729-3454	(709) 729-0102
Bill Mocsan	Ontario Ministry of Transportation	(905) 704-2343	(905) 704-2750
Marc Moncion	Ontario Ministry of Transportation	(905) 704-2763	(905) 704-2750
Mitchell Toker	Ontario Ministry of Transportation	(416) 235-3670	(416) 235-4850
Rod Taylor	Ontario Ministry of Transportation	(416) 235-3636	(416) 235-4850
Ron Covello	Ontario Ministry of Transportation	(905) 704-2566	(905) 704-2750
Ron Madill	Ontario Ministry of Transportation	(519) 873-4011	(519) 873-4088
Sara Londerville	Ontario Ministry of Transportation	(416) 235-5334	(416) 235-4932
Barrie Montague	Ontario Trucking Assn	(416) 249-7401	(416) 245-6152
John Eric Albrechtsen	Paul's Hauling Inc	(204) 633-4330	(204) 694-4335
Wilf MacDonald	PEI Dept of Transportation	(902) 368-5222	(902) 368-5236
Bruce Richards	Private Motor Truck Council	(905) 827-0587	(905) 827-8212
Marlow Rushfeldt	PSAC/Cage Logistics	(403) 223-2022	(403) 223-4006
Ernie Hamm	RV Dealers Association	(604) 533-4010	(604) 533-0795
Greg Gilks	Saskatchewan Highways and Transport.	(306) 787-4851	(306) 787-3963
Bill Sokil	Sokil Express Lines Inc.	(780) 479-1955	(780) 474-9325
Clement Thomas	Transport Canada	(613) 998-1908	(613) 998-2686
Emile DiSanza	Transport Canada	(613) 998-1914	(613) 998-2686
Claude Robert	Transport Robert/QTA	(514) 531-1011	(450) 641-3476
John Pearson	Transportation Association of Canada	(613) 489-2220	(613) 489-0221
Alan Robinson	Western Professional Truckers Assn	(250) 851-9482	(250) 851-9482