

December 2014

RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE

Study of the Regulatory Issues Affecting
Truck Freight Movement in the Midwest

SPONSORS

Iowa Department of Transportation
(InTrans Project 13-456)
Mid-America Transportation Center
U.S. DOT Research and Innovative
Technology Administration (RITA) and
Federal Highway Administration

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Jing Dong
Transportation Engineer
Center for Transportation Research and
Education, Iowa State University
515-294-3957
jingdong@iastate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Chris Albrecht
Transportation Research Specialist
Center for Transportation Research and
Education, Iowa State University

MORE INFORMATION

www.intrans.iastate.edu

CTRE

Iowa State University
2711 S. Loop Drive, Suite 4700
Ames, IA 50010-8664
515-294-8103

The mission of the Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) at Iowa State University is to develop and implement innovative methods, materials, and technologies for improving transportation efficiency, safety, reliability, and sustainability while improving the learning environment of students, faculty, and staff in transportation-related fields.

The sponsors of this research are not responsible for the accuracy of the information presented herein. The conclusions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the sponsors.

Study of the Regulatory Issues Affecting Truck Freight Movement in the Midwest

tech transfer summary

This initial study identified the need for and interest in a peer-to-peer event focused on identifying regulatory trends and issues, as well as the potential for Iowa and other states to find and prioritize possible regulatory changes to improve freight movement in Iowa and other Midwest states.

Background

Freight movement by truck across Iowa and throughout the Midwest states is a critical issue that will impact commerce in the short-term future (5 to 10 years) as well as the long-term future (20 to 50 years).

Problem Statement

Truck movements across the Midwest states are projected to increase, and this increase points to a need to remove potentially unnecessary barriers and obstacles and establish a more efficient and productive system for the movement of freight.

Project Objectives and Research Description

This project investigated regulatory issues that may affect or limit freight movement in Iowa and other Midwest states: Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The study looked to find common ground among all of the issues and the multiple stakeholders within the various states surrounding Iowa.

Current state regulations for the following were reviewed and are summarized in the final report:

- Vehicle dimensions
- Vehicle weights
- Speed limits
- Weight compliance enforcement
- Fees and taxes
- Driver qualifications
- Medical certification
- Hours of service
- Oversize-overweight permits

Prior to surveying the state agencies responsible for oversight of trucking regulations, the researchers sent inquires to more than 30 trucking companies. This was done to obtain the private sector's view on specific trucking regulations in Iowa.

Representatives from four companies that operate in the state responded and were interviewed. Based on the results from the private sector interviews, a survey for state departments of transportation (DOTs) was designed and sent to the neighboring states, as well as many other states in the central portion of the US. The focus of the survey was whether the size and weight regulations in Iowa have a negative impact on trucking freight flows.

Key Findings

Based on the literature review, the following inconsistencies in the regulations of the states were identified:

- Longer combination vehicles (LCVs) are only allowed on state roads in Nebraska and South Dakota and by the turnpike authority in Kansas.
- Although all states in the study area are member jurisdictions of the International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA), each state has defined its own fees for this program and specified different fuel tax requirements.
- Tolls are charged on the Illinois Tollway and the Kansas Turnpike.
- Weight enforcement practices, levels, and severity of penalties (for exceeding weight limits) are different between states.

Overall, discussions with private sector interests and state regulatory agencies noted that vehicle size and weight (including oversize-overweight permits) were of primary concern. Follow-up interviews with stakeholders in states throughout the central third of the US showed interest and strong opinions (which vary greatly) concerning changing limits.

Responses from the four companies that operate in the state, responded, and were interviewed are summarized into the following areas:

- There were very few concerns regarding driver qualifications or medical certification. Although concerns with the more restrictive medical requirements (such as body mass index (BMI) calculations) were noted by one company representative, none of the requirements are attributable specifically to Iowa. Almost all medical certification regulations are federal.
- Concerning enforcement and hours of service, there were no serious concerns noted for operations within Iowa. Hours of service are a significant, somewhat contentious, issue (34-hour restart, breaks, etc.), but are federally mandated. A few enforcement issues were noted, such as training inconsistency between states, but Iowa was not seen as one of the states of concern.

- Concerning fees and taxes, once again nothing significant was noted for Iowa. Tolls, which Iowa does not have, were noted as an issue at times for haulers. These toll fees were difficult to account for and recoup from shippers. Overall, it was noted that Iowa's fees and taxes were in line with or lower than neighboring states.
- One issue impacting driver availability is the North Dakota oil boom, but, once again, this and overall driver shortage is not a regulatory issue for Iowa.
- Finally, concerning vehicle size and weight (including oversize-overweight permits), opinions on changing limits vary greatly. It seems that groups are either strongly against or strongly for increasing limits to some extent. In general, it appears large trucking companies are advocating for increasing limits, while smaller firms are against it.

Implementation Readiness and Benefits

From this study, we identified the following potential efficiencies that may improve freight movements in the Midwest:

- Provide more streamlined regulatory services along the I-80 and I-35 freight corridors (e.g., oversize-overweight permit portal at www.gotpermits.com)
- Conduct benefit-cost analysis on allowing LCVs in Iowa, considering the impact of large trucks on the infrastructure
- Promote advanced vehicle technologies that may mitigate truck driver fatigue and improve safety

One of the most important conclusions from the stakeholder interviews and survey was the need and interest in a peer-to-peer event focused on identifying regulatory trends and issues, as well as the potential for Iowa and other states to find and prioritize possible regulatory changes to improve freight movement in Iowa and other Midwest states.

In future research, it is important to study the relationship between freight corridor performance and the existing regulations and to quantify the impacts of freight regulations on the safe and efficient movement of freight via trucks.