

Committee Members: Alex Appel, Brent Baker, Michael Callahan, Richard Cofer, Patti Early, Michael Frego, Matthew Hedge, Tom Kearney, Jonathan Mallard, Steve Park, Joe Salamy, David Schilling, Jeff Short, Michael Temple, Steven Todd, Bill Wondrachek

Public Participants: John Berg, Katelyn Dwyer,

Date and Time: Wednesday May 10, 2017 – Thursday, May 11, 2017

Location: U.S. Department of Transportation Conference Center
1200 New Jersey Ave SE, Washington, D.C. 20590

Purpose: Discuss the challenges associated with emergency permitting and routing of vehicles before, during, and after emergencies; Develop draft recommendations for best practices in emergency permitting and routing before, during, and after emergencies.

U.S. DOT and Consultant Staff: Crystal Jones (FHWA), Designated Federal Officer, Laurence O’Rourke (ICF), Jessica Klion (ICF)

Meeting Summary:

The discussion during the 1.5 day meeting followed the issues and general timing presented in the meeting agenda (Attachment A). However, the group participated in a formal discussion on considerations for best practices, including whether:

- 1) Impediments currently exist that prevent expeditious State approval of special permits for vehicles involved in emergency response and recovery;
- 2) It is possible to pre-identify and establish emergency routes between States through which infrastructure repair materials could be delivered following a natural disaster or emergency;
- 3) A State could pre-designate an emergency route identified under paragraph (2) as a certified emergency route if a motor vehicle that exceeds the otherwise applicable Federal and State truck size and weight limits may safely operate along such route during periods of declared emergency and recovery from such periods; and
- 4) An online map could be created to identify each pre-designated emergency route under paragraph (3), including information on specific vehicle limitations, obligations, and notification requirements along that route.

This discussion occurred during the morning on Monday, May 10 and set the stage for discussion of recommendations and advice from the utilities, Federal and State perspectives, which occurred throughout the afternoon on May 10 and in the morning on May 11.

Opening Remarks:

Crystal Jones and Michael Callahan provided opening remarks. Crystal introduced Katlyn Dwyer, AASHTO, who joined the meeting as a member of the public. At AASHTO, Dwyer is the program manager for freight and serves as staff for the sub-committee on highway transport. Her work on the committee has included efforts to harmonize the permitting process across States.

Michael Callahan and David Schilling provided a short overview of their experiences at the National Governors Association Roundtable on Governors' Executive Authority during Energy Emergencies. The meeting focused on providing governors the how-to information to handle an emergency. The meeting illustrated the need to both harmonize the permitting process and to show States why ease of permitting is so important during an emergency.

Considerations for Best Practices:

To begin the meeting, the group conducted a discussion on considerations for best practices, including whether:

- 1) impediments currently exist that prevent expeditious State approval of special permits for vehicles involved in emergency response and recovery;
- 2) it is possible to pre-identify and establish emergency routes between States through which infrastructure repair materials could be delivered following a natural disaster or emergency;
- 3) a State could pre-designate an emergency route identified under paragraph (2) as a certified emergency route if a motor vehicle that exceeds the otherwise applicable Federal and State truck size and weight limits may safely operate along such route during periods of declared emergency and recovery from such periods; and
- 4) an online map could be created to identify each pre-designated emergency route under paragraph (3), including information on specific vehicle limitations, obligations, and notification requirements along that route.

Through the discussion, a number of unresolved issues and/or barriers came to the surface which impede expedited response and recovery. These issues are summarized below:

- Identification of routes, including the vehicles that can use specific routes. Identification of connections to seaports (multimodality)
- Lack of broad knowledge of regulations and/or a one stop shop for all information pertaining to rules and the emergency, including IFTA and IRP
- Lack of a uniform data set and information sharing between States
- Lack of information on contacts during an emergency, including (but not limited to): State Energy Leads, State Permitting Officials, CVSA State Contacts, FMCSA State Contacts
- Lack of alerting system for States and officials outside of the emergency
- Lack of broadly available State Emergency Plans for Permits
- Challenge of return trips, after an emergency declaration ends
- Challenge of transporting shelters, such as temporary housing units
- Challenges associated with divisible and non-divisible loads (debris, water, food)
- Lack of a standard for expedited online permitting for oversize and overweight vehicles
- Challenge of paying for tolls – I-95 Corridor Coalition had a 'semi-solution' during Hurricane Sandy

- Legal vehicles (not oversize or overweight) should have a shorter path to permits

Related to question one (1) above, impediments identified include:

- Lack of central repository for information
- Define the Federal role in facilitating the issuance of emergency permits.
- Consideration of when – emergency's do not follow the regular workweek
- Up to date information from highway departments – it is necessary to keep bridge information up to date on certain routes – must develop a QA/QC process
- For multi-State routes that require permits:
 - mitigate the cumbersome process
 - harmonize among States
 - create a centralized system with a one-stop shop
 - develop funding mechanism for electronic systems for States (automated systems)
 - GPS routes in addition to paper routing
 - Future of autonomous vehicles – what impact will new technologies have

Related to question two (2) above, the following barriers and objectives were brought up:

- Barriers:
 - Data quality and availability
 - Who will maintain the map? No Federal authority exists for this.
 - Where will the map live?
 - Beginning and end points – first-mile/last-mile issue in developing routes
 - Common definitions
 - States concern over control of data when integrated
- Objectives:
 - Routes for legal loads
 - Defined set of actors who use the routes and the rights of the routes – free passage for restoration and recovery
 - Allow movement through pass-through States during an emergency
 - Near real-time information on the route
 - Integration with 511, Google, and similar data sources
 - List of legal weight, posted structures
 - Height clearance information, weigh station contact information
 - Standards for 511, specifically for emergency response

Related to question three (3) above, the following barriers and objectives were brought up:

- Barriers:
 - Construction zones
 - Vertical clearance
 - Lack of telecommunication connectivity between permit vehicle and roadside
 - Number of weigh stations
 - Weight posted bridges
 - Time of day restrictions

- Goals:
 - Legal acceptance of technical clearance
 - Dynamically changing routing system to capture changes during an emergency
 - State routes – Interstate, US Routes, access to population enters
 - Maps for non-auto issued permits States and guidance for States with auto-issue permits

This discussion helped to set the scene for discussions later in the day and on the second day of the meeting which centered on recommendations.

Recommendations:

After the discussion on best practices, the group moved on to discussing recommendations for the Secretary. The animated discussion looked at the strawmen developed during the previous work group meeting based on the Utility, Federal, and State and Enforcement Agency perspectives. While the initial discussion was centered around the three primary actors (utilities, Federal, and State and Enforcement Agencies), the resulting recommendations attempt to bridge the gap between actors.

Through the discussion, the group developed the following recommendations:

1. The Secretary should further encourage and incentivize states to modernize their permitting systems to provide for 24\7 automated permitting. This should include identifying new potential funding mechanisms to implement and maintain automated permitting systems.
2. The Secretary should document which states have automated permit systems (apply online and print out a permit), what the requirements for height, length, and width are, and determine why some states do not have automated systems.
3. The Secretary should work with AASHTO and other stakeholders to continue work on harmonization and standardization of oversize vehicle regulations to facilitate and expedite the issuance of permits during an emergency.
4. The Secretary should send a letter to the board of IRP Inc. requesting that they ask members to vote on a change in the IRP charter that would exempt utility trucks from the requirements of IRP reporting and fees. The letter would provide a short explanation of the problem and describe how this exemption would support the provision of mutual aid in the event of an emergency.
5. The Secretary should send a letter to IFTA Inc. requesting that they discuss with their members the benefits of exempting utility vehicles providing mutual aid from the provisions of IFTA and fuel tax reporting. The letter could request that IFTA either votes on changes to its charter to assist with mutual aid, or IFTA could encourage its members to communicate with their state legislators to make this change in state law.
6. The Secretary should instruct FHWA to lead the development of a shared website with all relevant permitting and regulatory compliance information that can be accessed by those participating in emergency response. The website should be a one stop shop for responders to utilize during emergencies.
7. The Secretary shall work closely with industry associations such as the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association to identify best practices for toll relief or expedited payment systems that speed up the movement of vehicles through tolls when these vehicles are responding to an emergency.

8. The Secretary shall write a letter to the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association to encourage the expedited implementation of nationwide interoperability of toll systems (such as EZPass, PrePass, Sunpass).
9. The Secretary should support the development of a guidebook on federal regulations and their requirements for emergency response. This guidance manual would describe the waivers and exemptions that are provided for in the law and through various emergency declarations.
10. The Secretary should instruct DOT to develop of a checklist for utilities engaged in emergency response. The checklist would provide a list of actions needed to expedite movement of vehicles while ensuring compliance with all relevant permitting and regulatory requirements.
11. The Secretary should study the feasibility of setting up an alert system (similar to an Amber Alert) to ensure state and local authorities are aware of the movement of emergency response convoys through their region. Enforcement officials may be able to take steps to expedite these vehicles through weigh station inspections or during other roadside inspections if they know in advance that they are coming.
12. The Secretary should encourage the development of a pre-clearance process that pre-identifies a set of vehicles that are part of response and recovery. This process should pre-identify a convoy and provide the convoy with certain privileges that include expedited inspection in weigh stations.
13. The Secretary should fund a study that examines a multi-state emergency route scenario. This study would test different scenarios for emergency response and identify how delays in permitting, differences in regulations between states and vehicle routing would affect the response times during an emergency.
14. The Secretary should ask states to designate emergency corridors that vehicles of certain width, height and length can use for emergencies to demonstrate the feasibility of this concept. The vehicle dimensions could be defined based on the most common oversized vehicles and loads used in emergency response.

Note that while recommendations were fleshed out, these recommendations are not yet final. In the upcoming meetings, the group will prioritize and frame the recommendations into actionable items.

Discussion of Report:

Following the discussion of recommendations, the group walked through the outline for the final report to the Secretary. There was broad agreement on the proposed outline, which will include the following sections:

- I. Executive Summary/ Letter Introduction
 - a. History of the Problem
 - b. Intent of Congress in establishing the committee
 - c. Activities of the committee
 - d. Best practices identified
- I. Response to charter questions (1 page – will refer to recommendations below) – how did we specifically respond to the charter – pull from butcher paper discussion
 - a. Do impediments currently exist that prevent expeditious state approval of special permits for vehicles involved in emergency response and recovery?

- b. Is it possible to pre-identify and establish emergency routes between states through which infrastructure repair materials could be delivered following a natural disaster or emergency?
 - c. Could a state pre-designate an emergency route as a certified emergency route if a motor vehicle that exceeds the otherwise applicable federal and state truck length or width limits may safely operate along such route during periods of declared emergency, or during the recovery afterwards?
 - d. Could an online map be created to identify each pre-designated emergency route, including information on specific limitations, obligations, and notification requirements along that route?
- II. Scope of the problem
- a. Type of emergency routing problems
 - b. Phases of emergency routing
 - c. Scale of emergency
- III. Recommendations

A draft report will be available for review prior to the next committee meeting in June 2017. Edits to the draft will be discussed during the June meeting.

**Emergency Route Working Group
1200 New Jersey Ave,
Washington DC SE 20590
US DOT Conference Center**

Connect to the meeting via webinar please use the following link:
<https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/freight/>
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AGENDA

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

8:30 – 9 a.m.	Opening Remarks
9 – 11:30 a.m.	Recommendations and Advice (Utilities perspective)
11:30 a.m. – 1p.m.	Lunch
1 – 3:00 p.m.	Recommendations and Advice (Federal perspective)
3:00 p.m.	Break
3:30–4:30 p.m.	Recommendations and Advice (State Department of Transportation and enforcement perspective)
4:30 p.m.	Wrap-up and Adjournment for the day

Thursday, May 11, 2017

8:30 – 9 a.m.	Opening Remarks
9–10:30 a.m.	Recommendations and Advice (State Department of Transportation and enforcement perspective, continued from May)
10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.	ERWG Report to the Secretary of Transportation (Outline Discussion)
12:00–12:30	Outstanding Issues and topics for additional deliberation
12:30 p.m.	Wrap-up and Adjournment