

IF YOU HIT THIS SIGN,  
YOU WILL HIT THAT BRIDGE



# TDOT Truck Route Restriction Guidelines 2019

Traffic Operations Division | July 2019

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## 1. PURPOSE

The guidelines contained in this document are provided to assist TDOT staff and city officials who are considering restricting large trucks along state-maintained highways within their city limits. Based on current Tennessee law, incorporated municipalities have the authority to restrict trucks on local streets and conventional state routes within their city limits, provided the route is not part of the National Network and the restriction does not deny reasonable access to the National Network. The processes described herein for routes which are not part of the National Network are not legal or regulatory requirements but rather serve as recommendations to assist cities when they have requested TDOT approval or concurrence to restrict trucks within their city limits. The specific steps may vary, depending on specific circumstances.

## 2. FEDERAL LAW REGARDING LIMITS FOR COMMERCIAL MOTORVEHICLES

Overland trucking is the primary means of moving goods in the United States. Commercial motor vehicles have state and federal legal protection. State law establishes the size and weight limits under which motor vehicles are generally authorized to operate on the state highway system. Federal law establishes weight limits for vehicles operating on the interstate highway system, as well as vehicle length and width limits for vehicles operating on interstate highways and other highways on the National Network of highways. The National Network includes highways that are specifically designated in 23 CFR, Part 658, Appendix A, for the purpose of carrying commercial motor vehicle traffic.

States are prohibited from enforcing vehicle weight and size limits below the limits authorized by federal law on the interstate system and the National Network. In addition, states are prohibited from denying commercial motor vehicles reasonable access between the National Network and terminals or facilities for food, fuel, repair, and rest or between the National Network and points of loading and unloading for household goods carriers or passenger carriers. Any request to delete a highway or segment of highway from the National Network must be approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The request must be supported by substantial evidence, such as accident data and the existence of restrictive roadway features demonstrating that it is unsafe to allow large commercial motor vehicles to operate on the highway, and it must show the availability of a reasonable alternate route. The imposition of use restrictions on National Network highways may also require FHWA approval.

## 3. GENERAL MOTOR VEHICLE WEIGHT AND SIZE LIMITS UNDER STATE LAW

- a. **Gross weight:** 80,000 pounds, except that freight motor vehicles operating on the interstate highway system shall not exceed the lesser of 80,000 pounds or the weight produced by application of the formula set forth in T.C.A. §55-7-203(b)(3).
- b. **Single axle:** 20,000 pounds, except as provided above.
- c. **Tandem axle:** 34,000 pounds, except as provided above.
- d. **Width:** 8 feet 6 inches.
- e. **Height:** 13 feet 6 inches.
- f. **Length:**

- Straight truck: 45 feet.
- Straight truck with trailer attached: 65 feet.
- Towed vehicle length for truck tractor and semitrailer or trailer combinations:
  - 50 feet from point of attachment; however, if the towed vehicle exceeds 48 feet from the point of attachment, the distance between the kingpin and the rearmost axle, or the midway point of a tandem rear axle, shall not exceed 41 feet.
  - 52 feet from point of attachment for vehicles carrying livestock, automobiles, or motor vehicle parts.
- Vehicles carrying poles, logs, or timber in single-length pieces: 75 feet.
- Towed vehicle length on truck tractor and twin trailer combinations: 28 feet, 6 inches; (applies to National Network highways).

#### 4. **RECOMMENDED PROCESS FOR CITY GOVERNMENTS TO RESTRICT TRUCKS NOT ON THE NATIONAL NETWORK**

Based on current Tennessee law, incorporated municipalities have the authority to restrict trucks on local streets and conventional state routes within their city limits, provided the route is not part of the National Network and the restriction does not deny reasonable access to the National Network. The process described below is intended as a general framework to assist cities when they have requested TDOT approval or concurrence to restrict trucks within their city limits. The specific steps may vary slightly, depending on specific circumstances.

- a. **Local Agency Prepares Initial Supporting Rationale for the Recommended Restriction.** The initial supporting rationale provides the information necessary to justify the proposed restriction. The rationale should include the proposed restriction type, reason (safety related) for the restriction, location, existing conditions, alternatives, maintenance and safety considerations on the alternative route(s), and any initial public comment.
- b. **Local Agency Makes Initial Contact with TDOT’s State Traffic Engineer for Further Instructions.** TDOT will make the initial review based on the supporting rationale and advise the local government of the determination. The request should be supported by substantial evidence, such as accident data and the existence of restrictive roadway features demonstrating that it is unsafe to allow large commercial motor vehicles to operate on the highway, and it must show the availability of a reasonable alternate route.
- c. **If Requested by State Traffic Engineer, Local Agency Prepares a Draft Truck Restriction Ordinance or Resolution.** The local agency prepares a draft ordinance or resolution of the proposed truck restriction and submits to TDOT’s State Traffic Engineer.
- d. **Local Agency Provides Public Review and Comment Period.** During the recommended public review period, the local agency gives public notice of the proposed truck restriction, and public hearings can be advertised and held. All documentation acquired to date regarding the proposed truck restriction should be available for public review prior to the public hearing.

- e. **Local Agency Receives Comments and Prepares Final Truck Restriction Report.** The local agency considers all comments received. If the local agency still wants to proceed with the proposed restriction, a final report is prepared and forwarded to TDOT's State Traffic Engineer. The final report should include the draft Ordinance or Resolution, along with all comments received and a formal sign plan.
- f. **TDOT's State Traffic Engineer Issues Written Concurrence.** The State Traffic Engineer, in cooperation with the Long Range Planning (Freight) and the TDOT Region Director, reviews the final truck restriction report and provides local government with letter of concurrence, if approved.
- g. **Local Agency Passes Final Truck Restriction Ordinance or Resolution.**
- h. **Local Agency Erects Truck Restriction Signs, and Restriction Is Enforced**

5. **PROCESS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO RESTRICT TRUCKS ON THE NATIONAL NETWORK:**

- a. **Local Agency Prepares a Draft Truck Restriction Ordinance or Resolution.** The local agency prepares a draft ordinance or resolution of the proposed truck restriction and informs TDOT's State Traffic Engineer.
- b. **Local Agency Prepares Initial Study.** The initial study provides the information necessary to justify the proposed restriction. The initial study should provide comments from the trucking industry, affected industries, and citizen groups. It should include the proposed restriction type, location, existing conditions, alternatives, maintenance, and safety considerations on the alternative route(s) and any initial public comment.
- c. **Local Agency Provides Public Review and Comment Period.** During the public review period, the local agency gives public notice of the proposed truck restriction, and public hearings can be advertised and held. All documentation acquired to date regarding the proposed truck restriction should be available for public review prior to the public hearing.
- d. **Local Agency Receives Comments and Prepares Final Truck Restriction Report.** The local agency considers all comments received. If the local agency still wants to proceed with the proposed restriction, a final truck restriction report is prepared and forwarded to TDOT's State Traffic Engineer. This final report includes any comment revisions and the draft restriction ordinance or resolution. (See the checklist for the contents of the truck restriction report, following these guidelines.)
- e. **State Traffic Engineer Submits Recommendation to the Chief Engineer's Office.** The State Traffic Engineer, in cooperation with the Long Range Planning Division (Freight), Region Director, and Legal Division, prepares a recommendation regarding the truck restriction and submits it to the TDOT's Chief Engineer.
- f. **Chief Engineer and FHWA Approval Is Received.** If approved by TDOT's Chief Engineer and FHWA, the State Traffic Engineer will issue a written approval

of the draft ordinance or resolution for the truck restriction.

**g. Local Agency Passes Final Truck Restriction Ordinance or Resolution.**

**h. Local Agency Erects Restriction Signs, and Restriction is Enforced.**

**Please note:** For any request to restrict trucks on the National Network, the process outlined above will apply, and all requests must be approved by the Federal Highway Administration, as outlined above.

**6. REPORT CHECKLIST FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO RESTRICT TRUCKS ON THE NATIONAL NETWORK**

Approval of restriction requests is contingent upon a complete identification and documentation of impacts on highway safety, structural integrity, environment, and operational efficiency. Some items may not apply; this checklist is only a guide.

**a. COVER**

- The document cover clearly states the County and City, if applicable, and the Route and log mile limits of the proposal. Any proposed local ordinance or resolution number should also be placed on the cover.

**b. PROPOSAL STATEMENT**

- The proposed restriction and references to specific codes, regulations, and any local ordinances or resolutions are clearly presented in the proposal statement. If exemptions to general rules apply, cite appropriate statutory law or regulations.

**c. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE PROPOSAL**

Justification depends on rationale: safety, hazardous materials, bridge weight limit, construction zones, seasonal operation, etc.

- Analyses of present and future safety, operational (capacity, geometrics), and/or structural adequacy supporting the restriction. A description of existing versus proposed conditions. Include supporting data tables, maps, and/or photographs.
- List of alternatives considered, e.g., truck advisory, restriction of 39-foot vehicles, or restriction of all trucks over a certain gross weight. Statement of the proposed restriction selected.
- Analysis of environmental considerations for the restriction proposal with an explanation of impacts and mitigation measures.
- Existing and future land use plans.
- Analysis of the impact on interstate and intrastate commerce. Analysis of the economic impact on communities, shippers, and trucking companies due to increased travel distances.
- Analysis and recommendations of any alternative routes that can safely accommodate legal commercial motor vehicles and serve the proposed

restriction area.

- Evidence of consultation with the local or adjoining state governments affected by the proposed restriction.
- Results of any public hearings.

**d. APPENDICES**

- Copies of any draft local restriction ordinances or resolutions.
- Copies of any supportive correspondence or documents for the restriction.
- Minutes of public hearings.

**7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**NATIONAL NETWORK ROUTE RESTRICTIONS**

**Federal Law:** The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 23, Part 658, identifies the National Network of highways available for use by large commercial vehicles authorized by provisions of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 (STAA), as amended, and prescribes national policies that govern truck size and weight on, and reasonable access to, the National Network.

**National Network Routes:** The National Network includes all highways on the Interstate System and the additional highways identified in 23 CFR, Part 658, Appendix A.

**Use Restrictions on the Interstate Highway System [23 CFR § 658.11(d)]:**

**Federal Approval:** Section 658.11(d)(1) states (emphasis added):

The deletion of, or imposition of use restrictions on, any specific segment of the Interstate Highway System on the **National Network**, except as otherwise provided in this part, **must be approved by the FHWA**. Such actions will be initiated on the FHWA's own initiative or on the request of the Governor or the Governor's authorized representative of the State in which the Interstate segment is located. Requests from the Governor or the Governor's authorized representative shall be submitted along with justification for the deletion or restriction, in writing, to the appropriate FHWA Division Office for transmittal to Washington Headquarters.

**Justification:** Section 658.11(d)(2) states (emphasis added):

The justification accompanying a request shall be based on the following:

- (i) Analysis of evidence of **safety problems** supporting the deletion or restriction as identified in § 658.11(c).
- (ii) Analysis of the **impact on interstate commerce**.
- (iii) Analysis and recommendation of any **alternative routes** that can safely accommodate commercial motor vehicles of the dimensions and configurations described in §§ 658.13 and 658.15 and serve the area in which such segment is located.
- (iv) Evidence of **consultation with the local governments** in which the segment is located as well as the Governor or the Governor's authorized

representative of any **adjacent State** that might be directly affected by such a deletion or restriction.

**Exceptions:** Section 658.11(d)(4) states:

Reasonable restrictions on the use of Interstate routes on the National Network by STAA-authorized vehicles related to specific travel lanes of multi-lane facilities, construction zones, adverse weather conditions or structural or clearance deficiencies are not subject to the requirements of paragraph (d) of this section.

**Public Notice Requirement:** Section 658.11(d)(5) states:

Proposed deletions or restrictions will be published in the Federal Register as an NRPM, except in the case of an emergency deletion as prescribed in § 658.11(e). The FHWA will consider the factors set out in paragraph (d)(2) of this section and the comments of interested parties. Any approval of deletion or restriction will be published as a final rule. A deletion of or restriction on a segment for reasons ascribable to dimensions of commercial motor vehicles described in either § 658.13 [length] or § [width] shall result in a deletion or restriction for the purposes of both §§ 658.13 and 658.15.

### **Use Restrictions on National Network Highways Other than Interstate Highways [23 CFR § 658.11(g)]:**

**Allowable Restrictions:** Section 658.11(g)(1) states:

Reasonable restrictions on the use of non-Interstate Federal-aid Primary routes on the National Network by STAA-authorized vehicles may be imposed during certain peak hours of travel or on specific travel lanes of multi-lane facilities. Restrictions related to construction zones, seasonal operation, adverse weather conditions or structural or clearance deficiencies may be imposed.

**Federal Approval:** Section 658.11(g)(2) states:

All restrictions on the use of the National Network based on hours of use by vehicles authorized by the STAA require FHWA approval. Requests for such restrictions on the National Network shall be submitted in writing to the appropriate FHWA Division Office. Approval of requests for restrictions will be contingent on the ability to justify significant negative impact on safety, the environment and/or operational efficiency.

### **Reasonable Access to the National Network [23 CFR § 658.19]:**

Section 658.19(a-j) states:

- (a) No State may enact or enforce any law denying reasonable access to vehicles with dimensions authorized by the STAA between the NN and terminals and facilities for food, fuel, repairs, and rest. In addition, no State may enact or enforce any law denying reasonable access between the NN and points of loading and unloading to household goods carriers, motor carriers of passengers, and any truck tractor-semitrailer combination in which the semitrailer has a length not to exceed 28 feet (28.5 feet where allowed pursuant to § 658.13(b)(5) of this part) and which generally operates as part of a vehicle combination described in §§ 658.13(b)(5) and 658.15(a) of this part.
- (b) All States shall make available to commercial motor vehicle operators information

regarding their reasonable access provisions to and from the National Network.

- (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed as preventing any State or local government from imposing any reasonable restriction, based on safety considerations, on access to points of loading and unloading by any truck tractor-semitrailer combination in which the semitrailer has a length not to exceed 28½ feet and which generally operates as part of a vehicle combination described in §§ 658.13(b)(5) and 658.15(a).
- (d) No State may enact or enforce any law denying access within 1 road-mile from the National Network using the most reasonable and practicable route available except for specific safety reasons on individual routes.
- (e) Approval of access for specific vehicles on any individual route applies to all vehicles of the same type regardless of ownership. Distinctions between vehicle types shall be based only on significant, substantial differences in their operating characteristics.
- (f) Blanket restrictions on 102-inch wide vehicles may not be imposed.
- (g) Vehicle dimension limits shall not be more restrictive than Federal requirements.
- (h) States shall ensure compliance with the requirements of this section for roads under the jurisdiction of local units of government.
- (i)(1) Except in those States in which State law authorizes the operation of STAA-dimensioned vehicles on all public roads and highways, all States shall have an access review process that provides for the review of requests for access from the National Network.
- (2) State access review processes shall provide for:
  - (i) One or more of the following:
    - (A) An analysis of the proposed access routes using observations or other data obtained from the operation of test vehicles over the routes;
    - (B) An analysis of the proposed access routes by application of vehicle templates to plans of the routes;
    - (C) A general provision for allowing access, without requiring a request, for commercial motor vehicles with semitrailers with a kingpin distance of 41 feet or less (measured from the kingpin to the center of the rear axle, if single, or the center of a group of rear axles). State safety analyses may be conducted on individual routes if warranted; and
  - (ii) All of the following:
    - (A) The denial of access to terminals and services only on the basis of safety and engineering analysis of the access route.
    - (B) The automatic approval of an access request if not acted upon within 90 days of receipt by the State. This provision shall become effective no later than 12 months following the effective date of this rule unless an extension is requested by the State and approved by FHWA.
    - (C) The denial of access for any 102- inch wide vehicles only on the basis of the characteristics of specific routes, in particular significant

deficiencies in lane width.

- (j)(1) Each State shall submit its access provisions to FHWA for approval within 6 months after June 1, 1990. In those States in which State law authorizes the operation of STAA-dimensional vehicles on all public roads and highways, no submission or approval under this paragraph is required. If, in the future, such a State changes its authorizing legislation and restricts the operation of STAA-dimensional vehicles, then compliance with these provisions will be necessary.
- (2) The FHWA will review the access provisions as submitted by each State subject to the provisions in paragraph (j)(1) and approve those that are in compliance with the requirements of this section. The FHWA may, at a State's request, approve State provisions that differ from the requirements of this section if FHWA determines that they provide reasonable access for STAA-dimensional vehicles and do not impose an unreasonable burden on motor freight carriers, shippers and receivers and service facility operators.
- (3) Any State that does not have FHWA approved access provisions in effect within 1 year after June 1, 1990 shall follow the requirements and the criteria set forth in this section and section 658.5 and 658.19 for determining access for STAA-dimensional vehicles to terminals and services. The FHWA may approve a State's request for a time extension if it is received by FHWA at least 1 month before the end of the 1 year period.

## 8. APPENDIX A: TDOT RECOMMENDED SIGNING

Note: All signing must conform to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The standard signs shown below are the basic signing recommended by TDOT to help insure uniformity across the state.

