



Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety

Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy

Minutes

Date: February 17, 1998
Location: Salon A&B,
Sheraton Centre Hotel, Montreal
Chair: Emile DiSanza (Transport Canada)
Secretary: J. Pearson
In Attendance: (See Attachment 1)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. DiSanza opened the meeting and welcomed participants to Montreal. He conveyed the regrets of Mr. André Trudeau, Deputy Minister from Transport Québec and Chairman of the Task Force, at being unable to attend. He indicated that, in Mr. Trudeau's absence, he had been asked to Chair the meeting.

He noted that while this was the first meeting of the full national committee since April 1997, two regional meetings had been held in September. He indicated that the pursuit of more compatible national standards for vehicle weights and dimensions remained an important work in progress, and that the participation of stakeholders in these discussions was extremely important.

2. Introductions

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

3. Status Report and Review of September 1997 Meetings:

a) Amendments to the National Standards (MOU)

Mr. Pearson provided a brief update on the status of amendments to the national standards contained in the MOU, noting that nine of the changes recommended by stakeholders last year had been endorsed by the Council of Ministers at its meeting in June 1997. In round table review, all jurisdictions indicated that efforts were being taken to accommodate the changes by the deadline of July 1, 1998.

Mr. Oldridge from B.C. reported that regulatory amendments had been made effective January 1988. The representatives of Alberta and Manitoba indicated that special permits are currently available for vehicles which comply with the changes. All other jurisdictions indicated that implementation would be done through regulatory changes, or if necessary, special permits would be available, by July 1.

Mr. Begin from Manac asked how Ontario would be dealing with the changes, in particular with respect to the use of lift axles on 50' 10" long trailers. Mr. Taylor indicated that while it was Ontario's intention to honor the agreement, the specific details of how the changes would be introduced was still under review. He indicated that he would take up Mr. Begin's question with his colleagues in the Ministry, and would provide a response after the meeting.

Action: Taylor

b) Task Force Mandate and Workplan

Mr. Pearson reported that a proposal to extend the mandate and workplan of the Task Force beyond March 1998 had been presented to the Council of Deputy Ministers in October. He indicated that the proposal had recently been endorsed by the Council, and that the current workplan included harmonization initiatives on both national and regional bases.

c) Western regional meeting (Sept 5, 1997) and Eastern regional meeting (Sept 12, 1997)

Mr. Pearson provided a brief review of the outcomes of the two regionally based meetings held in Regina and Fredericton, noting that the minutes from these meetings had been distributed to all participants in September. In discussion, the minutes of the eastern regional meeting in Fredericton were adopted as circulated.

Mr. Sokil raised a question with the wording of a motion in the western regional meeting minutes respecting Recommendation 13 (page 3). He indicated that the intent was to express support for the proposed increase in tandem axle weight limits if adopted as a "minimum standard" across Canada, not a uniform maximum standard. With this clarification, support was expressed for the minutes.

4. Follow-up actions from September Meetings

a) Special permit standards for Stinger-Steer Auto-Carriers

Copies of the draft special permit conditions for car carriers were distributed and the status of acceptance of the proposal was reviewed. It was noted that special permits were currently available in the western provinces (Manitoba to BC) and in the Atlantic provinces. Mr. Couture (Québec) and Mr. Taylor (Ontario) reported that the proposal was still under review.

b) Escort vehicle driver training and certification

Mr. Pearson drew attention to the draft proposed training manual for escort vehicle drivers. He reported that the initiative had originally been launched by New Brunswick, based on the requirements in New York State, to develop and implement training and certification requirements for escort vehicle drivers. He noted that strong support had been expressed for the concept at the meetings in September, provided a consistent nationally based approach was taken.

Mr. Goguen reported that his department was working on further revisions to this draft, and indicated that comments on the manual and the certification process would be welcomed.

Action: All members

c) Signing and marking for oversize/overweight special permit vehicles

Copies of draft document entitled "Proposed Standards for Warning Signs, Signals and Devices and Escort Vehicle Requirements for Movement of Overdimensional Loads" were distributed. Mr. Pearson noted that the objective was to reach national agreement on uniform requirements in this area, and that comments on the proposals would be welcomed.

Action: All members

d) Overall Width - common definition

Mr. Pearson noted that a number of issues had been raised in the past year respecting differences in the definitions used in different jurisdictions, particularly for overall width and overall length. In particular, he noted that questions had been raised with overall width definition as related to the acceptability of devices designed to prevent wheels leaving the vehicle, and to whether tarping

systems should be included in the measurement. He noted that similar questions had been raised with overall length, in particular related to whether devices installed at the front of vehicles to provide protection in collisions with wildlife could be exempted from the measurement.

He noted that it had been agreed in September that efforts should be taken to standardize these definitions. Draft proposals were circulated, along with an invitation to provide comments for consideration in seeking agreement.

Action: All members

e) Overall Length Controls

Mr. Pearson reported that a proposal had been made at the western meeting in Regina to eliminate overall length limit controls, in recognition of the controls which exist for trailer length, box length and tractor wheelbase. He noted that an assessment of the implications of this proposal had been requested, and provided copies and a brief presentation of a report which had been prepared for this purpose.

In discussion, it was generally agreed that elimination of overall length limits would not likely be a viable proposal in the near future. It was agreed that this issue should be included on the agenda of the NAFTA harmonization discussions with US and Mexico. It was also suggested that the overall length limits should be maintained, but that greater flexibility should be provided to vary trailer and tractor lengths within the length envelope, possibly by increasing or removing box length limit controls.

f) Stability and Control Performance - B and C Trains

Following up on a request made at the September meeting in Regina, Mr. Pearson distributed copies of a summary report comparing the performance of these two configurations. In presenting the report, he cautioned that the performance of vehicle configurations can vary significantly with changes in a wide range of variables including tire characteristics, vehicle dimensions, suspension properties, payload density and loading arrangement. In this regard he noted that the report could be at best a generalized comparison of typical B and C Trains configured within the limits of the MOU.

In discussion, Mr. Billing noted that the transient high-speed offtracking performance of a C train improves significantly if the steering axle on the dolly is locked (ie. cannot steer). In this regard, it was suggested consideration be given to requiring the dolly axle to be locked at highway speeds.

In addition, **it was agreed by motion** (Albrechtsen/Sokil) that, pending a review of the stability and control characteristics of C trains operating with the dolly steering axle locked at highway speed and unlocked at low speed, the Gross Vehicle Weight Limits for the C Train be increased to the same level as B trains.

It was further agreed that Mr. Gilks and Mr. Albrechtsen would lead a review of this issues.

Action: Gilks/Albrechtsen

g) Box Length Limit on B Trains

Mr. Pearson noted that a proposal had been made to increase the box length limit on B Trains to 21 metres to provide greater operational flexibility and wider choice trailer length combinations. Mr. Baird spoke to this proposal and provided copies of documentation which had been prepared in support of discussion of the issue. Mr. Petit elaborated on the operational constraints faced because of the 20 metre current box length limit.

It was agreed that an assessment of the implications of increasing the box length limit on B Trains to 21 metres would be undertaken. **It was further agreed** that if the performance criteria could be respected with such a change, a proposal to change the limit in the MOU would be advanced to the Council of Deputy Ministers for consideration.

h) Truck-Pony Trailer Weight Limits

In discussion, it was noted that a question had been raised at the meeting in Regina regarding changes which had been made to weight limits for this configuration in Saskatchewan in the late 1980's. Mr. Gilks indicated that he would discuss this issue further with Mr. Singer, from the Alberta Construction Trucking Association.

Action: Gilks

5. National Standards - Review of Status and Outstanding Issues

a. Status of discussions/analysis of outstanding proposals

A brief overview of the status of the original 23 proposed changes to the MOU standards was provided. It was noted that these had been consolidated into 16 proposals, 9 of which had been endorsed by the Council of Ministers in June 1997, leaving 7 under active consideration.

The status of each of the seven proposals was reviewed in detail as follows:

Proposal 1:

The major interprovincial routes within the designated highway system of the national agreement should not be subject to scheduled weight limit reductions in the spring thaw period.

Discussion:

It was noted that all jurisdictions had expressed support for this proposal except Québec.

Mr. Couture indicated that Québec had committed to undertake a major review of its spring weight restriction policies, including a study of the economic impacts, and a review of policies and enforcement procedures used in other jurisdictions. He noted that his department was concerned with the feasibility of removing the spring weight restrictions from only part of the network, not just from an enforcement perspective, but from the standpoint of inequities which would be faced by shippers on different road classifications.

Mr. Pigeon reported that QTA supported complete removal of the spring weight restrictions from all roads, but if that was not possible, the existing policies should be maintained to ensure shippers and carriers are treated equally.

Mr. Roy and Mr. Boyd offered assistance to Mr. Couture in the review, suggesting that industry would be pleased to work with Québec in finding a solution to the problem.

It was noted that APTC had prepared a report on the impacts of Québec's spring weight restrictions on shippers in Atlantic Canada. Copies of this report were distributed, and Mr. Vuillemot provided a brief presentation on the findings. He noted that there had been a few surprises in preparing the report, in particular the finding that some shippers are not faced with weight reductions during the spring period because low commodity densities, and that others are constrained by the weight limit reduction imposed by New Brunswick for roads not on the primary system.

Proposal 2:

The box length limit for A Train Doubles should be increased to 20 metres (from 18.5 m)

Discussion:

In review, it was noted that all jurisdictions except Ontario and Québec had expressed support for this proposal. Mr. Moroz indicated that Alberta had already taken steps to adopt this change.

Mr. Petit commented that the A Train remains a very popular configuration in the US and that some types of operations are best suited to this configuration. He noted that his company depended heavily on A trains in its operations, and with decreasing freight density needed greater cubic capacity, not additional weight. He drew attention to the fact that increased trailer length has a positive impact on the stability and control performance of A trains.

Mr. Baird commented that the intent of encouraging fleets to move to the B train had worked well, and that operations which are suited to this configuration have already made the transition. He expressed frustration with the prospect that a change in the national MOU standard could not be made when only two provinces did not support the proposal.

Mr. Taylor indicated that Ontario would be prepared to study the proposal further, and suggested that presentation of sound economic arguments in support of such a change would be of assistance. Mr. Baird indicated that he would be pleased to work with and assist both Québec and Ontario in their consideration of this proposal.

Mr. Couture reported that timing of the proposal did present some problems for his department, as efforts had been directed over the past year to expanding the route network available to B trains. While he acknowledged that there may be merit in increasing the box length on A trains, he suggested that Québec would need additional time to consider the proposal.

In concluding discussion of this item, **it was agreed by motion** (Baird/Dolyniuk) that this proposal be referred to the Council of Ministers for direction and resolution. It was further agreed that documentation of the potential impacts of this proposal should be prepared for review and comment by the full committee.

Action: Secretary**Proposal 3:**

The gross weight limit for eight (or nine) axle B Trains should be increased to 63,500 kg.

Discussion:

In discussion, it was noted that serious reservations with this proposal were expressed by the representatives from Québec, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick. The representatives from Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Alberta expressed qualified support for the proposal, noting that there were cost implications for the highway infrastructure, but these would be considered in the context of achieving regional or national uniformity. The representatives from Ontario and British Columbia noted that this limit currently exists in their jurisdictions.

Mr. Baird suggested that this issue should also be taken to the Council of Deputy Ministers for direction and resolution.

Mr. Gilks noted that one option which could be considered in Saskatchewan for this proposal would be the Partnership Program, whereby agreements can be struck with carriers to share the financial benefits of increased productivity to help offset additional infrastructure costs. Mr. Robert commented that the issue of increasing registration fees or user charges to pay for additional infrastructure costs was not necessary, noting that it is very expensive to register tractors to operate at the highest GVW limit, which in reality may only occur for 30% of the distance travelled by the tractor during a year. He also noted that US carriers currently pay little if any revenue in support of the Canadian highway system. In this regard Mr. Taylor noted that the situation would be changing as provinces move towards joining the International Registration Plan.

Proposals 4 & 5

The national standard for the weight limit of all tandem axle configurations with spreads between 1.2 and 1.85 metres should be increased from 17,000 kg to 18,000 kg., and

The national standard for the weight limit of tridem axle groups with spreads from 3.0 m to less than 3.6 m should be increased from 23,000 kg to 24,000 kg.

Discussion:

In review, opposition to the proposed increase in tandem axle weight limits was expressed by the representatives of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. Qualified support was expressed by the representatives from Alberta and Manitoba, based on achieving either regional or national uniformity. Unqualified support was expressed by New Brunswick, Québec, PEI, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

In review of the proposed increase in the weight limit for medium spreads tridems, opposition was expressed by Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario. Qualified support was expressed by Alberta, Manitoba and Newfoundland. It was noted that this limit has already been adopted by B.C. and PEI, and has been announced for introduction in Québec.

In discussion, Mr. Robert commented that the issue is not about increases or decreases in weight limits, but is much more importantly about establishing and implementing common standards. He suggested that the differences in regulations between Québec and Ontario pose major problems, and that it is time that the politicians step in to make decisions and see that they are implemented.

Mr. Montague noted that a considerable number of Ontario carriers are interested in reaching agreement with Québec on the quad axle group as well, and that this issue must be included in the discussions.

Mr. Alexandre commented that the shippers are caught in the middle of this protracted debate, and need decisions to be taken to eliminate the uncertainty and to maintain competitive positions with US companies.

Mr. Massing expressed considerable frustration with a process which requires the rest of the country to wait while protracted discussions are occurring between Québec and Ontario. He urged that these issues be taken to the Council of Ministers with the strong recommendation that decisions be taken and implemented. It was suggested that agreement between Ontario and Québec on harmonization of quad axle group weight limits should not stand in the way of making progress on other issues which were of national interest and urgency.

Proposal 6:

The national standard for the gross vehicle weight limit of 8 axle C Trains should be increased to 60,500 kg.

Discussion:

In view of the previous motion related to the GVW for C trains, no further discussion of this proposal occurred.

Proposal 7:

The national standard for the weight limit of tridem axle groups with spreads from 3.6 m to 3.7 m should be increased from 24,000 kg to 26,000 kg.

Discussion:

In review, it was noted that this proposal was supported by Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland. It was also noted that this proposal was not supported by Ontario and all western jurisdictions.

b. Summary and Actions Required

In concluding this discussion, it was agreed that the a strong message should be taken to the Council of Deputy Ministers from the stakeholders that assistance and direction was urgently needed on these issues from the Council of Ministers. Following a caucus by the for-hire carrier industry representatives, it was proposed that the following priorities be advanced for early resolution:

1. Tandem and Medium Spaced Tridem Axle Weight Limits; 18,000kg and 24,000 kg respectively
2. Increase the Box Length limit to 20 metres on A Train Doubles
3. Pending a review of stability and control characteristics:
 - increasing the weight limit for C trains to the same level as B trains
 - increasing the Box Length limit on B Trains to 21 metres
4. Eastern regional agreement on the proposed 26,000 kg weight limit for wide spaced tridem axle groups

6. Related Initiatives

a. Western Premiers Proposed Transportation Initiatives

Mr. Gilks provided a brief status report on work being done at the direction of the western Premiers, noting that a workplan had been developed to pursue "transparent" borders for trucking within the region. He noted that a more complete report would be available for the next regional meetings to be held in western Canada, tentatively in April.

b. Uniform Standards Within Atlantic Canada

Mr. Pearson reported that work was underway in pursuit of establishing uniform weight and dimension limits within Atlantic Canada, as directed by the Council of Maritime Premiers. He noted that a discussion paper was being drafted and would be available for review later in the spring.

7. Special Permits

a. Subcommittee on standards for Long Combination Vehicles

Mr. Gilks provided a brief status report on this project, noting that background documentation was being assembled in preparation for a first meeting of the group in Calgary in April.

b. Permit Conditions for Oversize/Overweight Vehicles and Loads

It was reported that two initiatives are underway in this area:

- an eastern provinces working group pursuing the concept of an "envelope vehicle" permit for overdimensional and/or overweight vehicles or loads
- a western provinces working group examining both the envelop vehicle concept, along with special permit conditions for specific, commonly used oversize or overweight equipment and machinery

It was noted that any interested parties would be welcome to participate in these discussions, and that further information would be available later in the spring.

c. Specialized Equipment

Mr. Gilks noted that a working group meeting would be convened in April to address the issue of common permit conditions for movement of specific types of specialized equipment used in western Canada (eg planetary drives)

8. Other Business:

a. Tow Trucks

Mr. Jackson from NRC Industries provided a brief presentation on tow truck designs developed by his company which employ a tag axle behind the drive tandem to improve stability and help solve problems of overloading. He provided copies of a test report to the representatives of each jurisdiction with a request that the designs be reviewed. It was agreed that each jurisdiction would contact Mr. Jackson after the meeting regarding the acceptability of the configuration and axle loading in their jurisdiction.

b. Bill of Lading

Mr. Robert provided a summary of weight and loading problems which are faced by carriers because of lack of information on bills of lading. It was suggested that this item be raised with the CCMTA Committee on Compliance and Regulatory Affairs.

c. Shared Inspection Facilities

Mr. Roy suggested that provinces should explore the opportunity to work more closely together on enforcement and inspection, particularly where there are opportunities to operate joint facilities. As example, he suggested that joint operation of weigh scales at border crossings would be beneficial to both carriers and compliance officials. Mr. Gilks reported that this concept was being pursued in western Canada. Mr. Moroz also noted that Alberta had established a joint facility with Montana, and were currently in discussions with BC.

Mr. Vuillemot suggested that there was a pressing need to look beyond inspection facilities to the prospect of inspecting a vehicle at its origin and providing clearance to its final destination, through exploitation of ITS and other new technologies.

d. Wheel-Off Restraint Device

Mr. Busse provided a brief overview of the device his company had designed to prevent wheels from leaving the vehicle in the event of axle or fastener failures. He indicated that it was his hope these devices would be excluded from the measurement of overall width.

e. Speed Limits

Mr. Roy noted that the introduction of toll road facilities in Atlantic Canada had been accompanied by increased speed limits, which was a growing concern to drivers.

9. Next Meeting

Mr. DiSanza thanked all participants for attending and for contributing to the discussions. He noted that the Council of Deputy Ministers would be meeting in April, and that a report on the outcome and further discussions required would be provided to members following the meeting.

Secretary: John Pearson

Date Distributed: March 25, 1998

Attachment 1:

Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy
Meeting - February 17, 1998, Montreal

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation	Phone	Fax
Alvin Moroz	Alberta Transportation	(403) 340-5189	(403) 340-5092
Barry Montague	Ontario Trucking Association	(416) 249-7401	(416) 245-6152
Bill Rowe	Nowesco Well Service Ltd	(403) 531-5187	(403) 286-8740
Bill Sokil	Sokil Express Lines	(403) 479-1955	(403) 474-9325
Bob Dolyniuk	Manitoba Trucking Association	(204) 632-6600	(204) 694-7134
Bruce Jackson	Industries NRC Inc	(613) 834-4156	(613) 834-7385
Claude Pigeon	Assoc. du Cammionage du Québec	(514) 932-0377	(514) 932-1358
Claude Robert	Transport Robert	(514) 521-1011	(514) 641-3476
Clement Thomas	Transport Canada	(613) 998-1908	(613) 998-2686
David Church	Canadian Pulp and Paper Association	(514) 861-8837	(514) 866-3035
Denis Goguen	New Brunswick Dept of Transportation	(506) 453-2802	(506) 453-3701
Dennis Pettit	Canadian Freightways	(403) 287-4399	(403) 287-4343
Don Stonehouse	N.S. Dept. of Transportation	(902) 424-6726	(902) 424-1163
Doug Massing	Petroleum Services Ass'n of Canada	(403) 781-7384	(403) 263-7174
Emile DiSanza	Transport Canada	(613) 998-1914	(613) 998-2686
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Greg Gilks	Saskatchewan Highways and Transport.	(306) 787-4851	(306) 787-3963
Jean Couture	Ministere des Transports du Québec	(418) 643-3595	(418) 644-9072
Jean Pierre Begin	Manac	(418) 228-2018	(418) 227-3344
John Billing	Canadian Transportation Equip. Assn.	(416) 499-3202	(416) 499-3202
John Erik Albrechtsen	Paul's Hauling Ltd.	(204) 633-4330	(204) 694-4335
John Pearson	Transportation Association of Canada	(613) 489-2220	(613) 489-0221
Kim Durdle	Newfoundland & Labrador	(709) 729-3454	(709) 729-0102
Lisa MacGillivray	Canadian Industrial Transport. League	(905) 947-0575	(905) 947-0585
Michel LaChance	Ministere des Transports du Québec	(418) 644-5598	(418) 644-9072
Norbert Pigeon	Industries NRC Inc	(514) 379-5796	(514) 379-5995
Pat Logan	Richard Freduette Inc.	(819) 845-9117	(819) 845-7443
Peter Baird	Canadian Freightways	(905) 625-1770	(905) 625-0244
Peter Roy	Air Liquide	(514) 846-3917	(514) 846-3915
Peter Vuillemot	Atlantic Provinces Transportation Comm.	(506) 857-2820	(506) 857-2835
Ralph Boyd	Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association	(506) 855-2782	(506) 853-7424
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