

Motor Carrier Advisory Council
Microsoft Teams Meeting
February 29, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Chief Chris Smith, Sandra Bianco, Commissioner Tony Guerrero, Deputy Commissioner Ben Arsenault, Deputy Commissioner Milli Torres-Ferguson, Jeannine Holmes, Felipe Briseno, Gene Catania, Michelle Givens, Dave Hiscox, Stacy Manware, Maryann Daly, Michele Moroni, Joan Nichols, Deb Notarino, Tiffany Hardwick, Mike Riley, Eyvonne Parker-Bair, Cindy Zuerblis, Kelly O’Connell, Christopher Herb, John Blair, Jean Cronin, James Polites, Lt. Evelyn Stender, Adam Grippo, Steve Shore, Donald Braman, Paul Farrell, Eric Johnson, David Hiscox, Paul Kritzler, Sgt. John Acampora

- I. **Call to Order** – Motor Carrier Advisory Council (MCAC) Chairman Christopher Smith called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and informed participants the meeting was being recorded.
- II. **Approval of the January 26, 2023, Minutes** – Chairman Smith asked if there were any changes to be made to the minutes from the last meeting. There weren’t any requests for changes. Chairman Smith asked for a motion to accept the minutes from June’s Motor Carrier Meeting David Hiscox motioned to approve the minutes, and Paul Farrell seconded the motion.
- III. **Review of the Legislative Session of the General Assembly** - Chairman Smith The 2024 Session has begun, Jim Politis was asked if DMV had anything that would affect the motor carrier industry at this time.

Dept. of Motor Vehicles, Legislative Review – Jim Polites

- Chairman Smith stated that there was some DMV legislation submitted but nothing that was specific to the Motor Carrier Industry. He also stated that the Commissioner testified on the DMV agency bills which was a set of technical changes and there were some statutory updates that were identified. The Commissioner also spoke on the governor’s proposal on drive only licenses and about low-speed vehicles and some registration issues. The topic of seat belts on school busses was also brought up. Jim also added that there is another Transportation Committee Meeting coming up on Monday March 4th.

Dept. of Economic and Community Development – No Attendee

Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Transportation – Sgt. John Acampora – Nothing to report.

Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection- Paul Farrell

- DEEP had proposed regulations to adopt California emission standards for light, medium and heavy-duty vehicles. The regulations were withdrawn from the legislative regulations review committee and never acted upon. The thought is there may be a legislative proposal at some point this session. Connecticut really needs these standards because this state continues to fail to meet federal health-based ozone standards for air quality.
- DEEP had applied for the Clean Fuels infrastructure grant and the application contained three different projects: hydrogen refueling infrastructure for medium and heavy-duty fuel cell powered vehicles, electric vehicles (EV) chargers for state parks, and EV chargers for seven Connecticut communities. FHWA funded the community's proposal and awarded Connecticut \$14.6 million dollars for electric vehicle infrastructure charging in seven different towns Stamford, Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, East Hartford Barkhamsted and Groton. Most of these funds are going towards 96 fast chargers and 8 or so level 2 chargers.
- DEEP is still working on their own internal processes and developing a medium and heavy-duty incentive program which was authorized by Public Act 22-25. The thinking was that once the medium and heavy-duty emission standards regulations were in place that the incentive program would follow, that was not the case. The State of Connecticut received a \$3 million dollar planning grant under Climate Pollution Reduction grant which is a 2 Tier grant, they must submit a priority climate action plan and then submitting that to EPA which is due by March 1, 2024. DEEP is also submitting an implementation grant application by April 1, 2024, which will also propose a zero emission MHD incentive program which could be as much as \$70 million for additional funding for medium, heavy duty electric vehicles. EPA should be awarding that towards the end of this year and they program would be launched in 2025.
- DEEP is also working on School Bus incentive program, which is now a staff level program proposal making its way through the internal decision-making process within DEEP and should have word on that soon. The second round of EPA clean school bus funding is looking more at entire fleet conversions for fleets of 25 buses or larger. These larger projects are easier to manage.
- There is no legislation out of DEEP this year for the Motor Carrier group.

Dept. of Revenue Services – No Attendee

DOT – David Hiscox

- Dave stated there is nothing on the docket for DOT they only thing he saw was a DMV bill that came through on the extra weight exemption for EV's, semis, and commercial trucks, DOT is looking at that. Jim Politis stated that DMV did not propose that bill.
- Mike Riley asked for some information regarding dimension permitting and self-issuance. Dave stated that there is a grant through FMCSA administered through the DMV for the upgrade of present online system for order routing which started in October. They are working with the vendor Bentley and Associates who are building the program behind the scenes. They will be doing user authentication testing hopefully over the summer and into the fall. There may be a staggered release with certain carriers that they interact with, but this project is moving forward.

Judicial – Stacey Manware

- No legislation to report but are reviewing the automated enforcement of the DOT bill and the substantial bill that relates to 14-140 regarding closing out licenses for people not responding to courts.
- Mike Riley asked Stacey if there were any reports regarding the increase of fines of commercial vehicles operating on the Merritt Parkway/Wilber Cross Parkway. Mike stated that the fines went up last year to 500.00 for a first offense and \$1000.00 for second offense, Mike was wondering if there were any statistics on how many tickets had been written. Stacy responded, if Mike sends her an e mail on what statute number that is regarding so she can get those numbers for him.

UCONN – Eric Jackson – No Attendee

Motor Carrier Industry

Connecticut Bus Association/CT School Transportation Association – Jean Cronin

- They will be major rewrite of the statutes, working with DOT and Revenue Services this is to address the certificate of need and necessity that the older bus companies the ones that predate DOT have had for decades there is a need for those companies to relinquish those certificates back to the department so that they will not be operating or possess them anymore. The problem is that this is what these companies are registering their vehicles under. There is a need to regulate these companies and figure out what permit they would get. They are currently working with attorneys and people from the legislature.
- Jean acknowledged Felipe Briseno regarding the motor bus regulations she stated that they have been working on this for ten years and that its up and running again. Felipe acknowledged this is true.

- Jean Acknowledged changes that will be made in the proficiency tests allowing the drivers a written test when they do the walk around on the bus with the inspector, this is a huge plus and this change should be taking place March 1, 2024.
- Reactivate the seat belt fund Senate bill 185 which was created in 2010 after a tragic school bus accident. No one has accessed the fund and it was millions of dollars accumulated from a fee that was added for reinstating licenses for people who had suspended licenses. In 2010 there were 5 towns with a seatbelt mandate now there is only one. The language to extend this mandate is no longer active, she would like to extend the language but do not want to see a school bus seat belt mandate.
- The Electric School Bus mandate is coming up which is exciting to hear, and the funding is still going through on that. Jean does not believe we're going to make the mandate on this cause of the high costs of the buses.
- There is a problem with pre-trip inspections in the morning and having the buses idling for an extended period, these buses must idle during the pre-trip. EPA agents and environmental activists have showed up at these companies taking pictures and sending pictures and videos to different outlets. The activists state that the buses run more than 3 minutes which in fact is true they must idle during the entire pre-trip. Inspectors are showing up and fining these companies extremely high fines which leads to legal fees. The Transportation Committee was approached to see if they could possibly amend this section of statute to include the pre-trip or some kind of mandate regarding mandated inspections. Looking for guidance from DMV regarding this situation and possible working with DEEP thru the fall to try to resolve this.
- Concerns regarding Everdriven which is a national company that is like an UBER for school children. It has private citizens in regular personal vehicles transporting children to school. There is no signage, no phone numbers no insurance. There is a correct way to go about getting the license for transporting school children and these procedures should be followed if you want to transport children. Chairman Smith asked Jim Politis if he is aware of the Everdriven company Jim stated he has and that there is not a legislative proposal, and they did testify at the committee but there are a lot of unanswered questions that are worth asking regarding this proposal. This is something they are looking into, and it is on the Agenda for the Monday March 4 Transportation Committee Meeting.

Connecticut Construction Industries Association – No Attendee

Connecticut Energy Marketers Association – Chris Herb

- Chris was wondering if there was a system that can be put in place to get notifications regarding travel bans in the state during storms. Chairman Smith added that he can see if there is a quicker way to get those alerts filtered down from the Governor's office.

The Governor's office does put out alerts on the Governor's office web site regarding travel bans during inclement weather.

- The Second item was the concern of overweight electric heavy and medium duty tractor trailers, the concern is that the weight of the batteries can significantly reduce the quantity of the loads that the trucks carry. Chris stated that the battery could increase the weight by 7000 lbs. He also suggested to form a working group of people from the state that enforce the laws and the industry people to work together because if the policies are going to continue to move forward, they want to try to have it not impact commerce too much. Dave Hiscox added that there is legislation proposed to have an exemption when a commercial vehicle solely powered by EV, that exemption is to have a 2000 lb. power unit. Dave Hiscox also agrees with Chris that a further discussion needs to be had regarding this issue.
- Chris had a question regarding what the impacts on FMCSA if there is a government shut down? Lieutenant Stender replied that a government shutdown would not affect our funding, once we receive the funding, we are able to expend it and a shutdown would not affect enforcement on the roads at all.

Connecticut Food Store Association – No Attendee

Connecticut Farm Bureau – Joan Nichols

- Joan stated that Section 4 Senate Bill 194 which is a Attorney General's bill, has a new section that would establish a year round harvest season for transportation of Agricultural products. This was already passed in New York and Massachusetts and is a part of FMCSA regulations regarding hours of service. This would exempt balance of agricultural products from hours-of-service rules when hauling products from the farm to a location within 150 miles of the source. This matter was brought to the agency's attention by the Green and Nursery industry to address the volatility and perishability of products that are hauled in non-climate-controlled containers such as dairy products and food that are in reefer trucks and livestock which rely on circulation of air when the trucks are moving. Joan stated the other states have this provision and it is an FMCSA rule, the agency is looking to adopt this at the state level and the Farm Bureau supports this.

Motor Transport Association of Connecticut – John Blair

- John agreed with Chris Herb regarding the early storm notifications. John stated that he was notified throughout the night during this last storm.
- Truck electrification is a concern and is being questioned nationally and is concerned if it is brought up, they will be having the same fight over again.
- There is legislation that is in place to look at the paid sick days, this bill impacts 50 or less members so this will impact MTAC members. There is also a health benefit bill that would allow members to have a large group plan.

Shore Associates – Steve Shore

- Steve Shore had a question for the Department of Revenue regarding collection and enforcement of the Connecticut Highway use fees. For the next meeting Steve would like to have Department of Revenue report of the enforcement and collection of the Highway use fees. John Blair added that he has reached out to DRS, one of his members wanted updated numbers also because they are one year into the program. John stated he will be getting the new numbers in the next week or so and will keep Steve Shore updated regarding the new information.

U.S DOT Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association (FMCSA) – No Attendee

Mike Riley spoke briefly and stated he was just an observer for this meeting, he was a member of the first Motor Carrier Advisory Council and is glad to see that it is still doing what it is supposed to do. He stated he is glad to see everyone sharing information and helping each other work through issues. Mike stated that some of the projects that were started many years ago are still under way and was encouraged to hear that the over dimension permitting self-issuance is still around, that was one of the projects that this council started out with and is still being worked on today.

Innovative Technology Deployment/Commercial Vehicle Operations (ITD/CVO) – Kelly O’Connell

- Working on the RFP for the Virtual Weigh Station but nothing new to add.

Performance Registration Information System Management (PRISM) – Kelly O’Connell

- PRISM project is wrapping up the final stages of testing for the automation of Federal Out of Service so when those reports are entered in, the system will automatically add the suspension onto that vehicle. That should be up and running with in the next couple of weeks.

Connecticut Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) – Lt. Stender

- CVSD is continuing to work on the Commercial Vehicle Safety plan. Since the last meeting CVSD has conducted approximately 10,000 inspections of those 10,000 inspections 1934 vehicles were placed out of service giving us an 18% out of service rate which is addressing the accident-causing trucks.
- The Connecticut Bypass Program is still up and running with an average savings of about \$100,000 a month to the industry which saves about 1000 hours in drivers not having to pull into weigh stations.
- Greenwich weigh station is still down, CVSD is working with DOT on the resolution on how to fix the signs for that weigh station.

- The new tire screening technology is being used at the Union Weigh Station, this will help with not wasting driver time and industry time and addressing the trucks that need to be addressed.
- On the School Bus stats we have currently at 4811 buses, at the halfway point of the year and halfway through the 5000 inspections we have about 315 of those buses placed out of service at a 7% out of service rate for School buses.
- Also focusing on speeding of Commercial Vehicles, with more laser technology.
- We also received grant money for Work zone safety and high crash corridors so you will see us on the highways this year.

CDL Testing – DEU – Cindy Zuerblis

- Cindy confirmed that the Pre-Trip (DVIR) program will be complete by March 1.

V. Closing Statements

- Chairman Smith stated the take aways from this meeting were the travel restriction issue during storms from Chris Herb and the question from Steve Shore regarding the highway use fees. Chairman Smith asked Steve Shore what exactly he was looking for on that? Was it an amount or something more specific, Steve stated he wants to see how effective it is, he stated there are 2 targets here one is the in-state motor carriers and the out of state carriers that are just passing through Connecticut. He is curious about the enforcement activities one thought was to tie this into suspending registrations if they do not pay their taxes or something automated to make sure the funds are coming in. John Blair stated he sees more out of state people are paying as opposed to in state.

Chairman Chris Smith -Motion to adjourn – Chris Herb, so move motion, David Hiscox Second.

- The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 pm.