

Final Recommendations of the Committee on Regional Truck Issues June 27, 2001

STUDY OBJECTIVES

- 1) Reduce the impacts of truck noise and vibrations on residents in the six MOU communities, especially at night, by reducing nighttime truck traffic in residential neighborhoods.
- 2) Ensure the continued delivery of goods and services by maintaining truck access to businesses and residences in those communities.
- 3) Ensure, where feasible, that truck traffic is directed towards those roadways with the least impact on residential areas and other sensitive receptors, and whose physical characteristics are best able to accommodate truck traffic.
- 4) To carry out these objectives, truck routes will be designated based on the following criteria:
 - a) Existing truck volumes
 - b) Truck origins and destinations along the route
 - c) Roadway geometrics and conditions
 - d) Current truck restrictions and National Highway System requirements
 - e) Continuous connections between communities
 - f) Impacts on residential areas and sensitive receptors

RECOMMENDATIONS

Truck Routes

- 1) The following roads (shown in dark blue on the attached map) should be designated as truck routes, and should be clearly signed as such by the appropriate community:
 - a) Eastern truck route comprised of First Street, Land Boulevard, and Binney Street in Cambridge
 - b) JFK Street in Cambridge
 - c) Broadway in Somerville
 - d) Somerville Avenue in Somerville (when the reconstruction project is completed)
 - e) Washington Street between the Somerville City Line and McGrath Highway in Somerville

Truck route signs should be consistent with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). MassHighway should work with communities that lack sufficient resources to provide truck route signs. Sign maintenance should be the responsibility of the community.

- 2) The following roads (shown in light blue on the map) should be designated as truck routes for connectivity purposes only, but not signed as such:
 - a) Gilmore Bridge in Cambridge
 - b) Cambridge Street in Charlestown
 - c) Arsenal Street in Watertown
 - d) Western Avenue in Boston
 - e) North Harvard Street in Boston
- 3) Alewife Brook Parkway between Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge and Broadway in Somerville, a distance of approximately one-quarter mile, (shown in light blue on the map) should be open to two-axle trucks, in addition to automobile traffic. It should be noted that the Metropolitan District Commission does not concur with this recommendation.
- 4) All state-numbered routes in the study area where trucks are allowed and cannot be excluded (shown in dark green on the map) should have sufficient route guide signs. MassHighway should inventory these routes and install additional signs as necessary; specific attention should be shown to ensuring sufficient route guide signs in the vicinity of Harvard Square in Cambridge to allow trucks to easily follow Route 2A in that area. Route guide signs inappropriately erected should be removed. In addition, Route 1 signs on Metropolitan District Commission roadways in the Fenway area of Boston should be removed to avoid confusion.
- 5) National Highway System roads where trucks are allowed and cannot be excluded are shown in light green on the map.
- 6) The Massachusetts Turnpike should install signs, consistent with MUTCD designs, that encourage trucks to remain on the Turnpike into Boston and the north-south expressway system, except for Hazardous Material (HAZMAT) trucks, which must exit at the Brighton/Cambridge interchange.
- 7) Communities should not change their intercommunity truck routes without consultation with adjacent communities and approval by MassHighway. Intercommunity routes are defined as those truck routes affecting more than one community.

Truck Exclusions

- 1) The following coordinated actions are recommended to improve access between the cities of Cambridge and Somerville to ensure continued economic activity for the industrial areas in southeast Somerville:
 - a) Continue the truck exclusion on Prospect Street in Cambridge from Massachusetts Avenue to the Somerville City Line and on Prospect Street in Somerville from the Cambridge City Line to Webster Avenue.

- b) Remove the truck exclusion on Prospect Street from Webster Avenue to Washington Street in Somerville to allow for truck access from Cambridge Street to Washington Street.
 - c) Remove the truck exclusion on Webster Avenue from Washington Street to Prospect Street to allow for truck access from Union Square in Somerville to Cambridge Street in Cambridge, when Webster Avenue is structurally capable.
 - d) Continue to allow trucks on Webster Avenue in Cambridge from Prospect Street to Cambridge Street.
 - e) After the project to reconstruct the Webster Avenue bridge has been completed, change Webster Avenue from Union Square to Prospect Street and Prospect Street from Washington Street to Webster Avenue from one-way to two-way streets to improve traffic flow in the Union Square area.
- 2) The City of Cambridge should request from MassHighway a 24-hour truck exclusion on Cardinal Medeiros Avenue, Warren Street, and on Putnam Avenue. The planned relocation of the MBTA's Lechmere Station and associated intersection improvements should be designed to make First Street a more attractive north-south route for trucks.
 - 3) The majority of the committee recommends that Alewife Brook Parkway should be opened to two-axle trucks from Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge to Broadway in Somerville. Based on model results, this is expected to divert a large portion of trucks accessing Somerville from Somerville Avenue to Broadway. The MDC, which owns and operates Alewife Brook Parkway, does not concur with this recommendation. Also, the majority of the committee recommends that Broadway in Arlington from the Somerville City Line to Route 60 should be designated as part of the regional truck network. The Town of Arlington, through a unanimous vote of its Board of Selectmen on June 25, 2001, does not concur with this recommendation.
 - 4) Roadways with truck exclusions should be well signed.
 - 5) Every effort should be made to reduce the length of the approval process for truck restrictions currently in place with MassHighway. An expedited review should be established for functionally classified local roadways that is no longer than 30 days.
 - 6) The communities in the study area should review locations of currently posted truck exclusions, and, for routes without official exclusions, and based on the information developed as part of this study, either remove those posted exclusion signs, or work with MassHighway to formally designate those roadways for truck exclusions. Where communities have been granted truck exclusions but do not wish to post exclusion signs, the community should inform MassHighway to revoke the truck exclusion permit.

Nighttime Restrictions

- 1) MassHighway should consider permits for necessary truck exclusions between the hours of 11 PM and 6 AM in the six MOU communities, except on the designated nighttime truck routes or for trucks that have an origin or destination in that community, after consultation with trucking industry representatives. Those routes are shown on the attached regional truck network map. A community's application for this nighttime restriction should list all streets where trucks are expected to be prohibited between 11 PM and 6 AM. As part of the approval, each community must provide within its borders an appropriate, continuous, designated, alternate truck route open to trucks at all times.
- 2) Based on the work that has been done as part of the regional truck study, the Committee recommends that the ban on nighttime traffic enacted as part of the Cambridge zoning ordinance be repealed and replaced by the series of recommendations included in the Technical Subcommittee's recommendations.

Hazardous Cargo Routing

- 1) The Subcommittee does not recommend pursuing opening of tunnels to hazardous cargo trucks on the expressway system in Boston at this time. However, the Technical Subcommittee recommends that the following actions be taken:
 - a) Determine how other states deal with hazardous cargoes in tunnels, and,
 - b) Conduct a risk/hazard assessment, based on Boston Fire Department and Mass Turnpike requirements, to determine whether it is feasible to open the Prudential tunnel to gas and oil cargoes. This assessment should review previous risk assessments that have been conducted, including a discussion of the assumptions regarding type of vehicular traffic that were made by the designers of the tunnels. It should also include a review of short-term and long-term impacts of previous tunnel fire/hazardous material incidents around the world. The review should consider the impact from a life safety, property protection, and economic/continuity of operations perspective. The City of Boston Fire Department should be invited to help in the development of the scope of work for the study and to participate in the study itself.
- 2) The City of Cambridge should post additional signs on River, Western, and Pleasant Streets between Massachusetts Avenue and Western Avenue to indicate that hazardous cargo trucks are allowed on these roadways 24 hours a day. This, along with the recommendations of posted truck route signs, should provide clear information for truckers.

Infrastructure Needs

- 1) Funding for adequate maintenance of pavement and bridges along the preferred regional truck routes should be a priority in future Transportation Improvement Programs. Four bridges and one roadway along these routes are currently structurally deficient with posted weight restrictions:
 - a) Route 2, Cambridge/Arlington
 - b) Mass Ave over Memorial Drive, Cambridge
 - c) Webster Avenue, Somerville
 - d) O'Brien Highway at the Museum of Science
 - e) Somerville Avenue, Somerville
- 2) Bridges with structural problems on routes with significant truck traffic should be identified and repaired as soon as possible although with lower priority than those on designated truck routes. The bridges currently identified in the study area include:
 - a) Sycamore St, Somerville
 - b) Lowell St, Somerville
 - c) Walnut Street, Somerville
 - d) School Street, Somerville
 - e) Cross Street, Somerville
- 3) The Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization should seek to identify additional funding sources, beyond those currently existing, to make sure that sufficient funds are available for these infrastructure needs.
- 4) Advanced Traveler Information Systems (ATIS) and mapping projects that help identify truck routes and improve flow along them should also have priority funding.

Noise

- 1) The trucking industry has agreed to promote a voluntary limit on the unnecessary use of jake brakes in densely populated urban areas, especially at night. Although documented use of jake brakes has not been widespread, it is acknowledged by the trucking industry that even infrequent use of jake brakes (a mechanism on large trucks whereby engine compression is used to slow a vehicle in addition to the vehicle's normal braking system), especially during nighttime hours, can be disturbing to residents. The industry will alert its members to the need to limit use except at the discretion of the driver in preserving public safety, and will urge compliance among all its members and drivers. This request should also be made through all outreach efforts, including maps and Internet postings, to the trucking industry.

Enforcement

- 1) Truck route and exclusion maps should be provided to all local and state police departments for distribution to truckers during routine stops. This map should also be provided through the Internet.
- 2) State and local police departments should continue enforcement of truck exclusions throughout the study area.
- 3) A program to educate truckers regarding excluded roadways throughout the entire study area should be developed. Current education efforts employed by the Cambridge Police Department have been effective and can be used as the basis for this program.
- 4) The six MOU communities should work together to encourage the Legislature to develop a program providing state grants to municipalities to supplement state and local truck law enforcement efforts.

Outreach to the Trucking Community

- 1) An essential part of mediating truck impacts involves informing the truck drivers themselves. Maps showing truck routes and restriction information will be produced and should be directly distributed to all trucking organizations with operations in the State. Companies making truck deliveries on routes through the study area should provide drivers with these maps and should also indicate the most appropriate routes to use.
- 2) Other ways to distribute this information should be explored. (For example, a web site could also be developed with this information, and a phone hotline could be established for drivers to contact when confronted with a confusing regulatory situation on the road.) The education program can be facilitated through MassHighway.

Ongoing Agency and Community Efforts

- 1) This study effort has been greatly benefited by the coordination of a number of concerned public and private sector organizations. This coordination should be continued because trucking-related concerns will continue indefinitely. MAPC and MassHighway should organize an on-going regional truck-related stakeholder group that would meet at least quarterly to discuss and develop regional truck issues and possible solutions and to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of this study.
- 2) As part of the Boston MPO's development of a comprehensive plan for moving freight into and within the Boston region, new ideas to limit the need for large trucks in residential areas, such as "bulk distribution terminals," should be investigated.