



# Give it a Rest

## Making the Case for More Freight Truck Parking

Every day we are constantly surrounded by other drivers on the road as we commute to work, school, or shopping. However, we tend to notice these drivers and their type of vehicle only when one cuts in front of us, or we must deal with congestion. Case in point: Trucks, large trucks such as semi-tractor trailers, affectionately known as semis, seem to be all around us, taking “our space” on the roadways. But before you ask for the elimination of these vehicles from the roads, consider the impact of these trucks and other delivery-type vehicles to the economic vitality of your community and beyond. The world of freight, and trucks in general, plays an important role in our lives. It is safe to say that almost all of the “stuff” in our homes was transported via truck before it ended up in our home. In fact, this year, the trucking industry is expected to transport over 10 billion tons of goods throughout the U.S., which translates to approximately 70% of all domestic freight tonnage.<sup>1</sup>

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Despite the significance of the trucking industry, there are many critical issues facing this sector. One of the major issues that will be discussed herein involves truck parking needs.

Before diving into the truck parking issue, it is best to first understand the roots of this problem, which are tied to driver fatigue and related crashes. Over the years, there has been an increase of trucks on the road, particularly due to interstate commerce. These drivers are traveling through multiple states, throughout the day and night with minimal sleep, in order to make a delivery in a prescribed timeframe. Given longer hours of driving without rest, driver fatigue tends to set in and has been shown to increase crashes, particularly fatalities, along our public roads.

Due to this public safety concern for both truck drivers and the general motoring public, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, which regulates the trucking industry, has mandated a new policy for hours-of-service (HOS) for the trucking industry. This policy, which was instituted in 2013, allows a truck driver, as part of interstate commerce or long-haul transporting, to drive a maximum of 11 consecutive hours within a 14-hour period. Immediately thereafter, a driver

must stop and rest for 10 consecutive hours off duty, or in a sleeper berth, before being allowed to resume driving.<sup>2</sup> Shorter hauls, such as intrastate travel (typically within a state) have similar requirements. For example, Florida allows for a maximum of 12 consecutive hours of driving before 10 consecutive hours of rest are mandated.<sup>3</sup> Due to these mandate requirements, as well as the increasing number of truck drivers on the road, the need for safe and appropriate spaces for overnight or general truck parking for drivers to rest is becoming more critical — nationwide.

Surveys of current truck parking spaces around the country have revealed that existing spaces are located on both public- and private-owned property. For many years, truck drivers would typically use the interstate system to transport goods to their destination. Thus, the free interstate public rest stop areas have been, and still are, a major parking destination for truck drivers. However, since these facilities have become extremely popular with the drivers, especially given the easy access into and out of these facilities, truck parking spaces are at a premium during the evening and overnight hours. Drivers often have to plan their routes in order to arrive earlier in the day to ensure a parking space.

Due to this situation, as well as other factors, including congestion on interstates, avoidance of tolls on toll roads, and expanded shippers throughout a state, truck drivers are diverting their travels onto non-interstate/arterial state roadways to deliver their goods. These alternate roadways, such as U.S. 27 in Florida, are becoming major freight corridors and have compelled the need for rest stop facilities along these alternate roads. U.S. 27, for example, is a major north/south roadway and, due to its location through the center of Florida and parallel to the major interstates (I-75 and I-95), it is considered the freight spine of Florida.

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To satisfy the truck parking demand on these alternate routes, larger private entities, such as Love’s Travel Stops and Pilot Flying J Travel Centers, just to name a few in the Southeast, have built facilities along these “alternate” corridors, miles from the interstate system, and still provide free parking. For example, in south central Florida, a new Love’s facility was recently opened along U.S. 27 in the town of Moore Haven, Florida near Lake Okeechobee. Also, Pilot Flying J has a facility located on U.S. 27 in the town of Haines City, Florida. Recent observations at this facility revealed near-capacity levels of truck parking during the middle (early afternoon) of the day, which is not even considered the peak period of the day.

To accommodate overflow of large trucks on a daily basis, Pilot Flying J has instituted a program allowing drivers to call ahead to reserve a parking space for one night for a nominal fee.

In addition to these larger private-owned properties, truck parking can be found at smaller “mom and pop” places. For instance, along U.S. 27 in the town of Frostproof, Florida, the “Orange Box Café” restaurant has catered to truck drivers by installing 10 to 15 designated truck parking spaces on-site.

Although the critical nature of truck parking demands varies from place to place, a sample of conditions can be summarized from the findings of a recent study undertaken by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One, which includes a 12-county area in the southwestern region of Florida.<sup>4</sup> This study, which was completed in June 2017, identified approximately 45 existing and proposed sites currently (or to be) used for truck parking, whether overnight or daytime, within this District. These sites, which total approximately 1,300 spaces, were primarily located on public- and private-owned properties similar to locations previously discussed. Based upon a comparison of these spaces and the daily number of trucks estimated to travel throughout the district on major routes alone, which is approximately 27,000 trucks, it can clearly be demonstrated that there is a significant shortfall in truck parking in this region of Florida. Please note that studies of this nature are being conducted by other FDOT districts, as well as other states, because this lack of truck parking is a nationwide issue.

To help offset the deficiency in truck parking spaces, some public agencies like FDOT, are playing a major role in evaluating and developing potential solutions. In Florida, there are numerous cities and communities that have restrictions or prohibition on truck parking via local ordinances. Although

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these ordinances may be appropriate for certain areas of a community, FDOT is considering coordination with city officials, as well as other pertinent stakeholders, including the private sector, to develop strategies to accommodate truck parking, particularly along commercial corridors where there may already be vacant or abandoned lands. Another potential solution being considered is the use of existing public lands for truck parking, such as expansion of existing interstate rest stop areas or vacant land currently held by FDOT along or near state facilities which are not earmarked for any development or use. This option will require extensive vetting by FDOT to ensure the appropriate use of the lands.

In summary, as freight movement via trucks continues to increase, truck parking demands will also increase. Although there is no clear “silver bullet” solution to this problem, public agencies, such as FDOT, are making attempts to coordinate with appropriate stakeholders in both the public and private sectors to locally develop strategies and solutions to this nationwide problem. ■

1 Iowa Motor Truck Association, “State of Trucking 2017: The Economic Impact of Trucking”, November 22, 2016, <http://www.iowamotortruck.com/imta-news-center.cfm/Article/General-Trucking-News/State-of-Trucking-2017--The-Economic-Impact-of-Trucking/2016-11-22>.

2 Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, “Interstate Truck Driver’s Guide to Hours of Service”, March 2015, [https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/docs/Drivers%20Guide%20to%20HOS%202015\\_508.pdf](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/docs/Drivers%20Guide%20to%20HOS%202015_508.pdf).

3 Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, “Intrastate HOS Rules”, Florida Statute 316.302, <https://www.flhsmv.gov/florida-highway-patrol/specialized-areas/commercial-vehicle-enforcement/intrastate-hos-rules/>.

4 Florida Department of Transportation District One, “Districtwide Freight Truck Parking Inventory”, June 26, 2017, [http://freightmovesflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/District-One-Truck-Parking-Inventory-Study\\_Final-July-2017.pdf](http://freightmovesflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/District-One-Truck-Parking-Inventory-Study_Final-July-2017.pdf).

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