

March 29, 2024

Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld:

As you may expect, many of our members have reached out to Maryland Motor Truck Association to discuss the tragic I-695 Key Bridge collapse. While all trucking sectors are likely to feel some operational and financial impacts from this tragedy, the most directly impacted will be those motor carriers that operate at the Port of Baltimore and those who pick up fuel in Curtis Bay.

In speaking with our members, we have identified the following needs for assistance. Because these needs cross Federal, state, and local jurisdictions, I am writing you with the hopes that your office will communicate these issues with the Governor, and that he may serve as an intermediary between the various governmental layers to ensure swift action is taken to protect those motor carriers who are now at risk due to the loss of freight and/or increased operating costs.

Driver hours of service extensions.

Under Federal and state law, truck drivers are generally limited to a maximum allowable drive time of 11 hours in a 14-hour window, followed by a mandatory 10-hour rest break. Making pickups or deliveries within this window will be severely strained due to increased traffic congestion and travel distance. For hazardous materials haulers (e.g., gasoline) the Key Bridge served as the primary route for companies picking up fuel in Curtis Bay and delivering to Baltimore's east side. Now those companies will be forced to travel approximately 30 additional miles along the west side of I-695 to make deliveries to areas like Edgemere.

For intermodal trucking companies, the challenge is even greater. Many are scrambling to pick up their customers' loads in Norfolk – approximately 238 miles and 4.5 hours from the Port of Baltimore. When factoring in cargo loading times, drivers will be strained to complete a single round trip within the 11-hour driving window.

Maryland Motor Truck Association believes a limited hours of service extension that increases the 11-hour maximum drive time by two additional hours is appropriate. Drivers would still be subject to the 14-hour on duty limitation and required to continue taking a mandatory 10-hour minimum rest break. As such, the Association believes this would not be a detriment to safety and would relieve pressure on drivers to complete the round trip in an 11-hour period by providing additional flexibility and opportunities to rest.

MMTA feels a 90-day extension is reasonable.

Lead agencies – Maryland Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Electronic logging device exception.

Under Federal law, drivers are required to use electronic logging devices to track their hours of service, with an exception for short-haul operators who stay within a 150 air-mile radius. Those drivers are still subject to the maximum driving hours noted above. Many drivers operating at the Port of Baltimore do not have electronic logging devices because they only operate locally within 150 air-miles. Now those drivers are being diverted to Norfolk, which is outside the short-haul limit.

MMTA believes a 90-day waiver of the electronic logging device mandate for drivers transporting intermodal freight from Norfolk is warranted, **if the driver is delivering to a destination within 150-air miles of the Port of Baltimore.** In lieu of an electronic logging device, **drivers should be required to use traditional paper logbooks.** This would streamline the ability of local drivers to quickly begin delivering freight and continue serving their customers without negatively impacting safety.

Lead agencies – Maryland Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

International Registration Plan waiver for apportioned registration.

The International Registration Plan (IRP) is a registration and license plate reciprocity agreement among the 48 contiguous U.S. states, the District of Columbia and ten Canadian provinces. Motor carriers with qualifying vehicles that travel in two or more jurisdictions (e.g., Maryland and Virginia) are required to be registered under IRP and display “apportioned” license plates from the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration. As already noted, many of our Port drivers have only operated locally and do not have apportioned tags that allow them to travel across state lines. This prevents them from picking up loads in Norfolk or Philadelphia. As such, we are requesting a 90-day waiver allowing intermodal motor carriers without apportioned tags to make pickup or deliveries from ports **only in our adjacent states** without the added cost or burden of registering with the IRP.

Lead agencies – Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, surrounding state driver licensing agencies.

International Fuel Tax Agreement waiver.

Similar to IRP, the International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA) is a motor fuel tax collection agreement between the 48 contiguous U.S. states and ten Canadian provinces. Motor carriers traveling in multiple jurisdictions must display decals on their vehicles that are issued by the Comptroller’s Office. Many local Port drivers do not have IFTA decals because they do not leave Maryland. MMTA believes a 90-day waiver allowing motor carriers without IFTA decals to travel **only to our adjacent states if they are hauling freight to or from a seaport** is warranted.

Lead agencies – Maryland Comptroller’s Office, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance.

Limited route openings for motor fuel haulers.

To address travel restrictions in the Baltimore tunnels, MMTA believes making certain local routes more widely available would benefit motor carriers picking up fuel in Curtis Bay and delivering to Baltimore’s east side. This would help alleviate traffic congestion on the west side of I-695. One such example would be Eastern Avenue in Baltimore. This route is currently identified as a local truck route but could be temporarily redesignated as a “through route.”

Lead agencies – Maryland State Highway Administration, Baltimore City Department of Transportation

Financial assistance for local businesses.

Until such time as the waterways are cleared and reopened for delivery, the blockade of the Patapsco River will choke off economic activity for local trucking companies. Many will be unable to survive in the days and weeks ahead without financial assistance.

We are aware that there are conversations among policymakers to offer some financial assistance to various workforces at the Port. Frequently we find that those discussions are limited to direct port jobs on terminal, with trucking being left out. MMTA is also aware that the Small Business Administration was able to quickly establish loan opportunities to businesses that were harmed during the shutdown of I-95 in Philadelphia last year. We urge the exploration of all available financial resources that would include trucking. A life support will be needed for many of these local businesses to keep them afloat. Without this the Port will have substantially reduced truck capacity to move freight when volumes are restored.

Lead agencies – U.S. Small Business Administration, Maryland Department of Commerce

Beyond the need for interagency coordination, we are finding that many of the exceptions and waivers of regulations in existing law are drafted with emergency relief efforts during a disaster in mind. **While some may not view a freight shift to another port or another mode of transportation as a disaster, for the local intermodal trucking industry it is one.** The Port of Baltimore relies greatly on the motor carrier industry and the independent owner-operator to move the containers, automobiles, and breakbulk products

that traverse its terminals. Motor Truck Association urges prompt action on the items noted above to ensure trucks can continue serving as the hub of the state's distribution wheel as they support the manufacturing, agricultural, and retail industries.

We appreciate the engagement of all applicable federal, state, and local government agencies to deploy the necessary resources needed on behalf of the trucking industry at this difficult time.

Thank you,



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cc: Wes Moore, Governor of Maryland
Brooke Lierman, Comptroller of Maryland
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