

# Local Truck Routing Initiatives Part II

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[Editor's Note: This paper is addressed to community leaders in the audience of the 1985 Road School.]

My presentation will deal with the trucking industry's perspective on two types of routing considerations: (1) general routing of trucks; and (2) routing of hazardous materials movements.

## GENERAL ROUTING OF TRUCKS

The main idea that I would like to get across to you is to discuss any traffic problems you feel you have in your community with trucking companies regularly serving your community and also with the business people in your area who depend on truck transportation. Please initiate these discussions at the earliest possible point in your consideration of any problem where you see truck routing as one possible solution.

Trucks are not on the road for fun; they are essential to meet the freight needs of most communities. All trucks are essential not just for big industry, but also for other types of businesses—restaurants, hardware stores, florists, grocers. All of these depend on trucks. Deliveries and pickups also involve residential homes. Based on these services trucks need access to all parts of your community.

Again, if you have a problem with traffic congestion, safety, or something else where you initially think truck routing is needed, please sit down with a broad base of trucking company representatives and other local people who rely on trucks *before* you formalize your ideas. The trucks using your streets are not all operated by trucking companies. Many local businesses will also operate their own truck fleets which requires convenient access to their facilities.

Listen to what these people have to say and be willing to change your ideas to allow commerce to function in your area. Any restrictions should be based on actual problems; not that somebody doesn't like to see trucks on their street.

Even if you are concerned only with through trucks, you should think about the impact before acting. Certainly, through trucks are generally looking for the quickest way through your town. But do you want to

cut off any opportunity that truckers would have of visiting a local restaurant, repair facility, or fuel station that is off the main highway?

If an ordinance is adopted, make sure you provide exceptions for local pickup and delivery. Also, adequate signs are needed so the trucker knows which roads are prohibited. The wording of the signs and the location of their posting should take into consideration the trucker who only infrequently goes into your area.

There are also certain things you can do to reduce the likelihood of needing a routing ordinance:

- (1) Roads that will carry heavy truck traffic regularly—because they lead to major industries—should be built for trucks. Consideration should be given to the pavement thickness, width of the road and design of the intersections. Trucks have gotten wider and longer over the years and this should be recognized when building new roads and in the rehabilitation of old roads. Our national association has developed a book “How Big is a Truck—How Sharp Does it Turn” which we would be happy to loan to you.
- (2) When trucks are able to use off-street docks, traffic congestion is alleviated and freight deliveries are made more efficiently, quickly, and safely.
- (3) Adequate curbside loading zones are needed where off-street docking is not available. The use of these loading zones should be strictly enforced.

We also strongly encourage that no artificial barriers to competition are created by a routing plan. This is what led to our involvement in consideration of the truck routing ordinance for the City of Crawfordsville. Originally, there was talk that the city would permit only small trucks to operate in the city. This would have eliminated many of the trucking companies that serve the city. I don't believe these ideas were formally proposed, but they were strongly rumored when Crawfordsville began considering an ordinance. The final ordinance did seem well drafted in that it recognized trucks must sometimes serve businesses and homes that are off the main streets, and—as far as I know—has not hampered commerce.

## ROUTING OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The routing of hazardous materials can be an emotional issue. In part, I think this is due to the media which relays the impression that all hazardous materials are highly toxic compounds. This is not true. The U.S. Department of Transportation has classified some 2,000 commodities as hazardous and these include such common products as cigarette lighters, strike-anywhere matches, paint, ink, and even some

alcoholic beverages. In fact, all motor vehicles are transporting a hazardous material—gasoline.

In exploring the routing of hazardous materials, you cannot route these movements out of your community and into another political subdivision. The courts are likely to strike down any ordinance that arbitrarily shifts traffic from one community to another.

If you feel that hazardous materials routing should be considered for your community, you should thoroughly study the safety problems that exist and compare the safety of the current route with a viable alternative route. The U.S. DOT has developed a guide for making that kind of study. The document is called “Guidelines for Applying Criteria to Designate Routes for Transporting Hazardous Materials.”

My earlier comments on general truck routing also apply to hazardous materials routing: 1) Sit down with industry and discuss the problems—there may be better solutions than routing and these other means may not interfere with commerce; and 2) if you do proceed with an ordinance, adequate signs are a must.

If your problem is only with certain companies which in your opinion are not transporting products safely, then you should work with appropriate enforcement officials to crack down on those specific companies and not penalize all carriers by adopting a routing ordinance.

Most hazardous materials are transported safely. Also, most hazardous materials, in the quantity hauled by trucks, do not present a grave danger to persons not in the immediate area of a spill.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I’d like to restate my main point: if you have a problem with trucks in your community, sit down with the trucking people and the business leaders in your community before you decide on a course of action. Work with these people to explore options other than routing.