

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Route 236 Implementation Committee and Interested Parties

**From:** Josh Mack, Transportation Planner

**Date:** June 2, 2005

**RE:** Meeting Notes from Overlimit Commercial Vehicle Meeting on May 25, 2005

---

This meeting was organized by the Route 236 Corridor Implementation Committee and KACTS to initiate a dialogue between towns on Route 236, the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles-Motor Carrier Services, the Maine State Police and the Maine Turnpike Authority regarding overdimension and overweight vehicles passing through the Route 236 corridor. Along with Route 202 and Interstate 95, Route 236 is one of the only available overlimit truck routes entering Maine from New Hampshire.

Those in attendance included Tim Bolton, Maine DOT-Office of Freight Transportation; Ruth Boston, South Berwick; Dave Burke, South Berwick Planning Board; Cathie Curtis, Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles; George Gorman, South Berwick Fire Chief; Jeff Grossman, South Berwick Town Manager; Chris Grotton, Maine State Police; Gary Hinkley, Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles; Steve Landry, Maine DOT Assistant State Traffic Engineer; George Mueller, South Berwick; Marion Glomp-Mueller, South Berwick; Josh Mack, Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission (SMRPC); George Muller, South Berwick; Tom Reinauer, SMRPC; Suzanne Roberge, South Berwick Town Council; Anita Rosencrantz, South Berwick Transportation Committee; Rick Rossiter, Kittery/KACTS; John Rudolph, South Berwick Transportation Committee; Duane Scott, Maine DOT; Norma Tutelian, South Berwick Town Council; Conrad Welzel, Maine Turnpike Authority

After introductions, presentations were made by several people to communicate issues and challenges experienced by overlimit commercial vehicles as they relate to Route 236. These speakers included:

- John Rudolph, South Berwick Traffic Committee;
- Gary Hinkley, Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles;
- Conrad Welzel, Maine Turnpike Authority; and
- Chris Grotton, Maine State Police

Key points of the speakers' presentations are provided below in bulleted format:

### John Rudolph, South Berwick Traffic Committee

- South Berwick has initiated or participated in several transportation planning activities, including the South Berwick Traffic Committee and the Route 236 Corridor Implementation Committee, all of which have found that overlimit commercial vehicles passing through the downtown area aggravate safety and mobility issues already experienced by the downtown, especially around school hours and commuting hours.
- Route 236 is a retrograde arterial, indicating that the area is already experiencing some of the worst access-related crashes in the region. Sending overlimit vehicles up a retrograde arterial is ill-advised.
- South Berwick has been interested in working with Maine DOT to study the possibility of a bypass around the downtown area. This could solve problems currently experienced by overlimit vehicles. The other more immediate, less costly option is to send overlimit vehicles up Interstate 95 through the Maine Turnpike. Why can't more vehicles be routed up Interstate 95?

### Gary Hinkley, Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles

- The Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles issues permits for overlimit vehicles. The charge of the permitting office is to protect infrastructure and safety. This requires that the permitting office balance conflicts of interests regarding overlimit commercial vehicle routing. Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles tries to find the best and most direct route available. Maine issues roughly 35,000 permits a year. These include single and long term permits. Single permits are for a 7 day window. The Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles coordinates with Maine DOT to route where there will be no road or bridge construction. Every trip permit must be approved by the permitting office and the majority of the permits are routine.
- Issue with permitting process is that people under or overreport dimensions or weights. This can have an impact on roads like Route 236, because over or underreporting often causes the permitting office to route the overlimit vehicles differently.
- Approximately half of the vehicles traveling up Route 236 have a destination in the region.
- Loads are sent up 236, 4 and 202 out of necessity. The Maine Turnpike has restrictions on overlimit vehicles. Vehicle cannot be taller than 13'6" and cannot be wider than 14'6". Also there are restrictions for overlimit vehicles on Friday afternoons.
- The Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles is working with Maine DOT to see if the 511 system can be used as a way to warn overlimit loads of inclement weather and the need for the trucks to stop when there are adverse weather conditions.

### Conrad Welzel, Maine Turnpike Authority

- Maine Turnpike Authority is familiar with many of the concerns of diverting overlimit vehicles away from the Maine Turnpike and on to roads like Route 236. The Maine Turnpike Authority has actively participated in town and regional planning activities such as the Route 236 Corridor Implementation Committee to get feedback and communicate with towns about various issues relating to the Turnpike.
- Major issue for Maine Turnpike Authority is that infrastructure along Route 95 does not have the requisite dimensions for many overlimit vehicles. During the widening process many of the bridges were raised to increase safety along the turnpike (Conrad distributed pictures of commercial vehicle damage of overheight vehicles hitting bridges). However, many of the toll plazas along the corridor do not have dimension requirements for oversized vehicles.
- Simply routing vehicles through selected exits with the requisite dimensions remains a financial and safety risk for the Maine Turnpike Authority. If a vehicle misses its exit or needs to pull off on an exit not on its route during inclement weather, that truck could damage toll booths and other bridge infrastructure near the exit.
- Maine Turnpike Authority is working with the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles in possibly adjusting the Friday afternoon rule that currently restricts overlimit vehicles from the Turnpike.
- Increasing height and width dimensions of Turnpike infrastructure is being looked at by Maine Turnpike Authority long-term planning committee, of which Harland Goodwin (member of Route 236 Corridor Implementation Committee) is Chair.

### Chris Grotton, Maine State Police

- Maine State Police have a Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division which consists of 21 troopers. There are 3 supervisors and there are 12 vehicles equipped with weight enforcement equipment. The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division does not only monitor overlimit vehicles—they also monitor smaller trucks such as gravel trucks. There are 2 troopers that live in the vicinity of Route 236. State Police do not really have enough resources. Division is not only enforcing state overlimit rules, but also Federal Motor Carrier Regulations. The Division inspects roughly 6,200 commercial vehicles a year with its 21 troopers. Rarely is there an overlimit violation.
- The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division has two static details in Kittery and York.
- Major issue for state police is that truck drivers communicate very well about enforcement activities and avoid enforcement details.
- Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division does offer training for local police forces to inspect overlimit vehicles. However sometimes more enforcement is not better as it quickly creates traffic problems.
- Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division details are run based on the following data: weigh in motion traffic data in Kittery on Interstate 95, commercial vehicle crash data and complaint data from citizens and towns.

After the presentations by the four speakers, a dialogue began between meeting attendants to identify ways for all parties to collaborate and possibly resolve some of the problems identified with overlimit commercial vehicles passing through the 236 corridor. Some ideas that were developed were identified as activities that could take place immediately after the meeting. Other ideas would need further exploration.

**Immediate Action Items:**

1. Through the Maine Department of Motor Vehicles Overlimit Permitting Office, **send advisory letters to regular permit applicants** advising them to refrain from traveling through downtown South Berwick during school opening and closing hours.

Maine Department of Motor Vehicles response was that an advisory letter might be helpful, but many of the companies that regularly purchase permits already have drivers that are well aware of peak congestion hours. The Department has companies on file to which it could send this letter.

2. **Have the Maine Turnpike Authority provide up-to-date information from their long-range planning group on what the Turnpike is planning to do to address future infrastructure and dimensional needs of overlimit commercial vehicles** on the Turnpike.

Community members expressed the concern that they want to make sure Maine Turnpike Authority has this issue on their “front burner.”

3. **Work with towns on corridor to write letter to governor/legislature requesting more resources for the Maine State Police Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division.**
4. **Organize Maine State Police training for local law enforcement** personnel on how to inspect and/or coordinate with the Maine State Police with regard to commercial vehicles.

Maine State Police noted that local law enforcement, unlike the State Police, must be able to cite an infraction in order to stop a commercial vehicle. It is very difficult to spot overlimit vehicles with a violation. Maine State Police avoids this problem because it is given the legal authority to randomly inspect commercial vehicles. However, any ways to multiply forces are encouraged by State Police.

5. **Request Maine State Police to share information with local law enforcement when Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit details are working in Kittery and York.**

Maine State Police had no objection to this recommendation.

6. **Convene another meeting that is more representative of overlimit stakeholders.** Specifically invite trucking industry representatives and legislators to the meeting.
7. **Request that SMRPC and Maine DOT Office of Freight Transportation research how other states plan for with overlimit commercial vehicle traffic** off of interstate highways.

### **Action Items Requiring Research/Consensus Building Before Implementation**

1. Through the Maine Department of Motor Vehicles Overlimit Permitting Office, **post advisories on website and permits** to permit applicants advising trucks to not pass through South Berwick's downtown during school opening and closing hours.

Maine DOT's Steve Landry explained that it would really have to be advisory only—not an enforced restriction. There is a danger in making it a restriction because all towns will want similar restrictions. This would severely disrupt trucking routes. Another caveat, offered by Gary Hinkley with the Maine Department of Motor Vehicles, is that trucks coming from far away (eg. Pennsylvania) cannot adequately time truck routes to conform to even an advisory. Gary said a website advisory could definitely be done, but he will need to consult with his office to see if issuing an advisory with a permit can be done.

2. Have the Maine Turnpike Authority and Maine Department of Transportation **perform an assessment as to which exits are heavily used by overlimit vehicles.** Use this information to plan capital investments in toll booth reconstruction to allow for overlimit vehicles.

Maine Turnpike Authority's response is that its long-term planning committee is currently looking into this issue. Maine Turnpike Authority will only be comfortable with overlimit vehicles on its highway when all toll booths are built to adequately handle overlimit vehicles.

3. **Examine how signage can be used to warn and navigate truckers** around exits and bridges that cannot handle overlimit vehicles. A suggestion of placing European break-away sign bridges was offered to the Maine Turnpike.

Maine Turnpike Authority responded that this is another long-term planning committee focus and is built into the 10 year plan process. It was explained that even sign bridges are very costly, upwards of .5 million dollars.

4. **Contact legislators to examine feasibility of developing overlimit dimensional restrictions on oversize loads** such as mobile homes. This will help identify other side of the equation—the construction industry’s overlimit loads that eventually impact safety and mobility on highways like Route 236.

It was pointed out at the meeting that part of the issue with the overlimit issue is that there are currently no restrictions on the dimensions of loads carried on vehicles traveling on roads in the state. For example, mobile homes, which are mass produced and are one of the more common overlimit loads passing through Route 236 do not have their height or widths regulated.

5. **Evaluate whether a special vehicle dimension standard is required for an engineering review or police detail when traveling through downtown South Berwick.** Currently vehicles taller than 16’ and wider than 16’8” require a police escort. Vehicles of a certain height and weight require an engineering review. Lane width and turns are probably tighter than most locations and overlimit vehicles of a certain size may require a special engineering review.

Maine DOT explained that engineering resources are scarce and if a smaller dimensional review standard would be used that other towns may want a similar standard. Officials were not clear if the current standard is a minor technical or major substantive rule.

6. **Score or categorize trucking routes in the State of Maine based on the danger or traffic congestion problems already experienced by an area.** Require larger fees for routes based on categorizing system. Or develop something similar to access management categorization specifically for truck routes.

Maine DOT strongly advised group to not complicate Maine DOT access management rules as they are being heavily scrutinized by the legislature.