



*Statement of*

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**And**  
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*Before the*

**United States Senate**  
**Committee on Environment and Public Works**  
**Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

*Hearing on*

**“Understanding Roadway Safety: Examining the Causes of Roadway Safety  
Challenges and Possible Interventions”**

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## Introduction

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Cramer, and Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to testify before you on behalf of the American Trucking Associations (ATA), the Iowa Motor Truck Association (IMTA), and our nation's trucking industry. In addition to my duties as President & CEO of the IMTA, I serve as co-chair of the advisory council for the Women in Motion (WIM) program at ATA and as a member of the American Transportation Research Institute's (ATRI) Board of Directors.

ATA is a 90-year-old federation and the largest national trade organization representing the 8.4 million men and women working in trucking-related jobs. ATA is a fifty-state federation that encompasses 37,000 motor carriers and their suppliers, and our members represent every sector of the industry, from less-than-truckload (LTL) to truckload, refrigerated transport for food and beverage to intermodal trucking, and automobile haulage to household goods movements. ATA members range from the nation's largest motor carriers to mom-and-pop one-truck operations.

For 81 years, IMTA has been the trusted voice of the trucking industry in Iowa. IMTA is dedicated to improving safety and educating the public on the importance of the trucking industry. From research on the impact of heavy-duty trucks on Iowa highways to advocating for allocation of tax dollars to ensure the smooth flow of freight in our supply chains, IMTA works tirelessly to make an impact at the state and local level, and well as the federal level as a part of the ATA federation.

The Women in Motion program, which I co-chair, was established to promote and support the advancement of women in the trucking industry by providing access to robust training, mentorship, and networking opportunities; advocating for policies and practices that create a level playing field for women in the industry; and fostering communication and collaboration among women truckers and their allies. The WIM program seeks to address the gender gap in the trucking industry's workforce by empowering women to pursue and succeed in all aspects of trucking, from driving to management, and celebrate the achievements of trailblazers in a historically male-dominated industry. By creating a strong community of women and allies in the industry, the program aims to foster a more diverse and inclusive trucking industry that benefits everyone.

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify today on the ongoing investments that the trucking industry is making to ensure the safety of all road users. ATA and IMTA members are dedicated to the mission of safety, investing billions of dollars each year and working with policymakers to identify not only how our roads and bridges can be safer, but how we can make driving a truck in interstate commerce a safer and more secure way for the next generation of supply chain workers to earn their livelihoods. I hope that my testimony will help this Subcommittee evaluate a path forward to aid in those efforts.

The American public is more aware than ever of the importance of the trucking industry. Polling shows that the percentage of Americans with a positive perception of trucking has risen from 67% in 2019 to 87% in 2022 -- a 30% improvement.<sup>1</sup> An astounding 97% of Americans believe that trucking plays a very important role in the U.S. economy, and 72% rate the industry's safety record as excellent or good.<sup>2</sup>

Our nation's highways are the workplace for more than 3.5 million professional truck drivers, who travel over 320 billion miles – 13 million trips around the globe – every year to deliver roughly 12

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<sup>1</sup> "Trucking Moves America Forward: 2022 Annual Report." March 2023, [https://truckingmovesamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2023\\_TMAF-2022-AR\\_3.10.23-FINAL.pdf](https://truckingmovesamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2023_TMAF-2022-AR_3.10.23-FINAL.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

billion tons of freight.<sup>3</sup> Trucks move over 72% of our nation’s freight by tonnage, and trucking is the sole mode of transportation providing freight services to 80% of American communities.<sup>4</sup> Currently 8.4 million Americans work in a trucking-related job<sup>5</sup>, and trucking is among the top five most common occupations in 28 states.<sup>6</sup> Trucking truly does keep America moving forward.

## Trucking’s Commitment to Safety

Safety is, and always will be, the foundation of the trucking industry. Safety shapes our core values and decision making. Since deregulation in 1980, both the number of fatal truck crashes and rate of fatalities have declined significantly.<sup>7</sup> However, ATA does acknowledge a concerning uptick in fatal crashes in recent years. While the overwhelming majority of truck-related crashes are the fault of the passenger vehicle, several other factors have contributed to this increase, including a rise in impaired and distracted driving.<sup>8</sup> Safety on our nation’s roadways—the workplace of the trucking industry—is paramount, and the industry is committed to advancing solutions that will reduce fatal crashes, including the deployment of automated vehicles and other advanced technologies. A safety investment study published in 2016 found that the trucking industry invests nearly \$9.5 billion annually in safety initiatives, including onboard technologies such as electronic logging devices, collision avoidance systems,<sup>9</sup> and brake-activated pulsating warning lamps. Our investments also include driver safety training, driver safety incentive pay, and mechanisms to ensure compliance with safety regulations. ATA is currently updating the study. While some of these investments are in response to regulatory requirements, many go above and beyond the obligations established by state and federal regulations. To that end, ATA proudly joined the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) newly established National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS) and was one of 49 “first movers” that committed to specific actions to address highway safety, focusing particularly on educating motorists about how to safely share the road with trucks.<sup>10</sup>

## Opportunities for Improving Highway Safety

Mr. Chairman, we believe that safety is a three-legged stool; in this metaphor, safety is achieved through drivers, vehicles, and infrastructure. While much has been done to improve the safety of vehicles and drivers, the design and condition of the highway system has fallen by the wayside. This Subcommittee has an opportunity to significantly reduce the number and severity of crashes by supporting new strategic investments. ATA believes that additional investments should be made in the following areas:

### *Truck Parking*

An important infrastructure priority for trucking, which was not specifically addressed in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), is the critical need for investment in truck parking capacity. The shortage of truck parking spaces nationally is a multifaceted problem: it’s a safety concern

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<sup>3</sup> *American Trucking Trends, 2023.*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics*, May 2022

<sup>7</sup> Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2020, Trends Chapter, Table 4, page 7, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Washington, D.C. [https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/2022-10/LTBCF%202020-v5\\_FINAL-09-20-2022%20508%2010-3.pdf](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/2022-10/LTBCF%202020-v5_FINAL-09-20-2022%20508%2010-3.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *Financial Responsibility Requirements for Commercial Motor Vehicles, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration*, January 2013, page xii, footnote 2.

<sup>9</sup> ATA Safety Investment Study 2016. <http://www.trucking.org>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.transportation.gov/nrсс/allies-in-action>.

for drivers and the motoring public, a hurdle to the recruitment and retention of female truck drivers, a compliance nightmare for law enforcement, a source of unnecessary air pollution, and an impediment to driver productivity. In my capacity as President & CEO of the IMTA and co-chair of WIM, I hope to convey to this Subcommittee how the shortage of truck parking capacity presents one of the direst yet rectifiable threats to the trucking workforce.

ATA strongly supports the *Truck Parking Safety Improvement Act*, S. 1034, which would establish a competitive discretionary grant program and dedicate \$755 million over five years for truck parking projects across the country. Importantly, this bill creates eligibility for projects that improve the safety of commercial truck drivers, and that detail could make a key difference to our efforts to recruit and retain truck drivers, especially female drivers. Mr. Chairman, we want to thank you, Subcommittee members Senators Lummis and Boozman, and Ranking Member Cramer in particular for taking the lead on this life-saving initiative.

In 2015, the Federal Highway Administration's "Jason's Law" report acknowledged the shortage of truck parking capacity as a serious highway safety concern. FHWA found that more than 75 percent of truck drivers and almost 66 percent of logistics personnel "regularly [experienced] problems with finding safe parking locations when rest was needed."<sup>11</sup> Due to inaction at the federal, state, and local level, the truck parking shortage has only worsened since 2016. In 2019, the FHWA found that the percentage of drivers who regularly experienced difficulty finding truck parking had skyrocketed from 75 percent to 98 percent.<sup>12</sup> The hazards of the parking shortage were sadly brought to the nation's attention in July, when three passengers were killed and many others seriously injured after a Greyhound bus hit three tractor-semitrailers parked on the shoulder of a rest area's exit ramp on I-70 in Illinois. The drivers were forced to park on the shoulder when the rest area filled up. ATA's Law Enforcement Advisory Board sent letters to all 50 State Governors last year to relay how the shortage of truck parking capacity puts law enforcement in a difficult position; enforcement officials can either force truck drivers to relocate—placing them in violation of hours-of-service (HOS) rules and taking a risk that the drivers may be too fatigued to drive safely—or they can allow the drivers to remain parked illegally. The bottom line is that safety is compromised when truck parking is not readily available.

The lack of available truck parking not only has a severe impact on the health and well-being of truck drivers, but it also contributes to driver utilization inefficiencies. Time spent looking for available truck parking costs the average driver about \$5,500 in direct lost compensation—or a 12% cut in annual pay, according to a 2016 report.<sup>13</sup> Truck drivers give up an average of 56 minutes of available drive time per day parking early to avoid the risk of being unable to find authorized parking down the road. Additionally, HOS violations stemming from an inability to find safe, legal truck parking can be costly as well. HOS fines range from \$150 to \$16,000, and an accumulation of violations can lead to a decrease in a driver's safety history, leading to higher insurance rates and even license suspension.

It is also important to be aware of the impacts that state and federal regulations requiring the adoption of zero emission vehicles will have on the supply of truck parking. Charging a battery-electric truck takes several hours, and currently models have a range of no more than 250 miles. This will require truck drivers to park for extended periods far more often than they do today. Furthermore, as the industry

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<sup>11</sup> *Jason's Law Truck Parking Survey Results and Comparative Analysis*. Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, August 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Jason's Law Commercial Motor Vehicle Parking Survey and Comparative Assessment Presentation, Federal Highway Administration, December 2020.

<sup>13</sup> *Managing Critical Truck Parking Case Study: Real World Insights from Truck Parking Diaries*. American Transportation Research Institute, December 2016.

makes the transition to zero emission trucks – a process that could take decades – truck parking facilities will have to dedicate a certain percentage of their spaces to electric vehicles, potentially eliminating a significant amount of parking capacity for diesel-fueled trucks.

The lack of safe, secure parking makes trucking a less attractive profession, particularly for women. Women currently make up only 7% of our nation’s drivers. I urge members of this Subcommittee to consider how long you would tolerate a job where access to a restroom and a safe place to rest is not a guarantee. The entire ATA federation is trying to harness the energy of our member companies, state trucking associations, and federal advocates through the ATA’s WIM program to raise awareness and encourage solutions to issues that discourage prospective female drivers from beginning fruitful careers in trucking. The lack of female drivers is a tragedy because, with only a high-school diploma and a few months of training, truck drivers can start a small business or get a well-paid, steady job that can support a family. As recently as last year, we saw our supply chains struggle with a nationwide driver shortage of 78,000 drivers. Adding safe truck parking capacity will make interstate trucking a more attractive career for women and other currently underrepresented demographics. Furthermore, recruiting more women into the industry is a critical part of our safety strategy because males are 14 percent more likely to be involved in a crash than females.<sup>14</sup>

Federal investment in the expansion of truck parking capacity is key to addressing this longstanding problem. In my own state of Iowa, the DOT plans to close eight full-service rest areas and ten parking-only rest areas due to financial constraints.<sup>15</sup> With the passage of the *Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act*, significant resources are now available to state and local governments to address this critical challenge. Construction of new truck parking capacity at rest areas or adjacent to private facilities is eligible for funding, as are improvements that allow for increased parking capacity at nontraditional locations, such as weigh stations and commuter lots, when appropriate.

We appreciate the Subcommittee’s attention to this challenge as well as the initiative taken by a handful of states to secure federal funding for new parking capacity; however, little progress has been made overall thus far. Without a dedicated revenue source, the investment levels necessary to ensure that the trucking industry can safely serve the nation’s interstate commerce needs will not be met. For this reason, ATA strongly encourages the full Environment and Public Works Committee to send the *Truck Parking Safety Improvement Act* to the Senate floor and, eventually, the President’s desk.

#### *Improving the Condition and Performance of Roadways Improves Safety, Supply Chain Efficiency, and Public Health Outcomes*

One of the most important benefits of the increased investments under IIA is the impact on highway safety. Highway condition, design, and operational efficiency all play a role in highway safety outcomes.

One report found that the U.S. has a \$146 billion backlog in needed roadway safety improvements.<sup>16</sup> The study concluded that if these investments were made, the present value of the 20-year safety benefits would be \$348 billion, meaning that 2.4 dollars can be saved for every dollar invested in roadway safety. These improvements could prevent 63,700 fatalities and more than 350,000 serious injuries over 20 years.<sup>17</sup> The recommended improvements included, among other strategies, adding

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<sup>14</sup> <https://truckingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ATRI-Predicting-Truck-Crash-Involvement-2022.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Iowa DOT State Freight Plan 2022, p. 106

<sup>16</sup> AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, *Safety Benefits of Highway Infrastructure Investments*, May 2017.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

passing lanes, widening lanes and shoulders, adding median barriers, installing centerline or shoulder rumble strips, providing grade separations at intersections, signaling intersections, and updating rail crossings. Furthermore, as congestion increases, so does crash risk. According to one study, during peak travel periods, crash rates on freeways rise significantly as traffic volumes build.<sup>18</sup> In addition, when roads are congested, emergency vehicles are impeded from responding in potentially life-or-death situations.

In 2021, truck drivers spent nearly 1.3 billion hours sitting in congestion, the equivalent of 460,716 commercial truck drivers sitting idle for an entire working year.<sup>19</sup> This was up more than eight percent over 2019. As a result of congestion, 6.793 billion extra gallons of diesel were unnecessarily consumed in 2021, resulting in the release of approximately 69 million metric tons of excess CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>20</sup> This represents approximately 17 percent of the CO<sub>2</sub> released by trucks.

In addition to safety and health concerns, congestion serves as a brake on economic growth and job creation nationwide. A first-world economy cannot survive a developing-world infrastructure system. As such, the federal government has an obligation to ensure that necessary resources are available to address this self-imposed and completely solvable situation. Specifically, ATA recommends that the USDOT prioritize the discretionary program resources made available by the IIJA to address major freight bottlenecks. A recent report from ATRI identified the top 100 freight bottlenecks nationwide.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, given the importance of the National Highway System—and especially the Interstate System—to the supply chain, a greater share of federal investment should be directed toward the maintenance and improvement of these highways.

Given that this Subcommittee oversees distribution of IIJA funding, ATA strongly supports ensuring that resources are dedicated for projects that will improve freight mobility and safety. Furthermore, projects of regional and national significance should not be unnecessarily delayed due to environmental permitting.

Although the IIJA did not set aside funding for either highway bottleneck elimination or intermodal connectors, these projects are eligible for funding under several of the discretionary programs, including the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program, the Bridge Investment Program, the National Infrastructure Project Assistance Program, and the Local and Regional Project Assistance Program. Congress should provide the necessary oversight to ensure that the resources available from these important programs are used primarily for projects that improve transportation safety and mobility, as well as projects that address infrastructure deficiencies that contribute to supply chain inefficiencies. These programs should not be used to advance parochial agendas that are outside of their Congressionally mandated scope. Under the IIJA, States will receive more than \$50 billion per year in federal-aid highway funding, and much of that can be used to repair and modernize existing infrastructure to improve the performance and safety of freight corridors.

Additionally, ATA does not support federal policies that are likely to prevent or hamstring State and local agencies' efforts to expand highway capacity. This includes conditioning the expenditure of federal funds for new capacity on a showing that alternatives, such as operational strategies or investment in

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<sup>18</sup> Chang, Gang-Len and Hua Xiang, University of Maryland. *The Relationship between Congestion Levels and Accidents*. Aug. 21, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> *Cost of Congestion to the Trucking Industry: 2023 Update*. American Transportation Research Institute, Oct. 2023.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Top 100 Bottlenecks – 2022*. American Transportation Research Institute, 2022.

alternative transportation modes, are definitively ruled out. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process already requires consideration of alternatives, and layering additional requirements onto the existing process is redundant, costly, and cumbersome. We are also concerned about policies that seek to eliminate or downgrade highways in the name of equity or environmental justice without fully accounting for the impacts of these approaches on supply chain efficiency or safety.

### *Emergency Permitting Reform*

Thirdly, this Subcommittee has an opportunity to take commonsense steps to improve waivers and permitting in situations where high volumes of time-sensitive freight must be transported, particularly during times of emergencies and declared disasters.

Natural disasters – hurricanes, tornados, floods, wildfires or pandemics, to name a few – can cause serious disruption to communities for days, weeks, or even months. In the aftermath of disasters, the trucking industry answers the call to provide life-saving supplies and help affected communities to recover. Relief and recovery supplies can include water for drinking or fighting fires; food; generators; equipment for rebuilding a decimated power grid; trailers to provide shelter for those who are suddenly made homeless; or building supplies to repair or replace damaged homes, buildings, roads or bridges. In addition, trucks must often remove thousands of tons of debris in order to allow the recovery process to begin.

Most often in these scenarios, time is of the essence. Lives are at risk when potable water is in short supply, hospitals or nursing homes with patients too sick to evacuate do not have the electricity needed to power life-saving medical equipment, or water needed to fight wildfires is in short supply. In these cases, maximizing the trucking industry’s ability to move as much cargo as possible, as quickly as possible, is critical. A key to expediting these loads is to maximize a truck’s cargo space by allowing the trucking company to exceed state and federal weight limits on a temporary basis.

Federal law limits a truck’s gross (total) and axle weights when they are operating on the Interstate Highway System. States determine weight limits on non-Interstate roads. In 2012, federal law authorized states to issue special overweight permits for vehicles and loads that are delivering relief supplies during a Presidentially declared emergency or major disaster. Both the weight limits and the routes on which permitted trucks may operate are determined by each state. A Presidential declaration expires after 120 days. Trucks operating under special permit may only deliver to a destination in the locations covered by the declaration or haul debris from those locations. An overweight vehicle must have a permit from each state in which it operates if that vehicle exceeds the state’s legal weight limits.

In practice, the current system has significant flaws. Emergencies that qualify under the Stafford Act are limited to traditional natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes. Certain emergencies, such as the supply chain crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy shortage caused by the cyber-attack on the Colonial Pipeline, do not qualify. In addition, relying on a Presidential declaration to enable the issuance of permits is problematic. First, some situations do not rise to the level of a national emergency. Some are more limited in scope but still require a significant response from the trucking industry. Waiting for a Presidential declaration can also slow the process or make it less effective. Finally, Stafford Act declarations expire after 120 days. In some cases—the COVID-19 pandemic being a good example—emergency response may need to be extended.

To address these challenges, ATA recommends the following changes to federal law governing the issuance of emergency overweight permits:



- A more expansive definition of qualifying emergencies must be implemented to ensure that all potential situations receive an adequate response;
- Both the Secretary of Transportation (or Federal Highway Administrator) and Governors should be given the authority to issue an emergency declaration that enables the issuance of emergency overweight permits. If Governors issue the declaration, FHWA should have the authority to override the order if it finds that the declaration is not consistent with Federal law; and
- The Secretary or FHWA Administrator should be given the authority to extend the declaration beyond 120 days.

### **Additional Supply Chain Options for Congress to Address**

In addition to the opportunities for the Subcommittee mentioned above, I want to highlight other opportunities that may come before you on the floor of the Senate in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

First and foremost, I want to again thank the Chairman and Senator Lummis for their sponsorship of another important bill – the *Licensing Individual Commercial Exam-takers Now Safely and Efficiently (LICENSE) Act*, S. 1649. This valuable legislation provides flexibility for individuals pursuing their training and testing requirements to obtain Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDLs). The bill makes permanent waivers that were repeatedly found to have no adverse safety impacts and approved on a temporary basis by both Republican and Democratic administrations during the COVID-19 pandemic. ATA strongly supports this legislation.

Additionally, by harmonizing application requirements and eliminating duplicative background checks for the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) and Hazardous Materials Endorsement (HME), we can encourage a larger pool of qualified truck drivers to pursue credentials that will allow them to safely move sensitive freight. The *Transportation Security Screening Modernization Act* (H.R. 5840) is currently pending in the House and would make commonsense reforms to these programs at the Transportation Security Administration. We are grateful to Subcommittee Member Wicker for sponsoring legislation on this issue in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress and anticipate Senate introduction of updated companion legislation in the near future.

We must invest in our land ports of entry and prioritize the efficient movement of freight, particularly as near-shoring and friend-shoring become increasingly important to American manufacturing and supply chains. We must also address the scourge of cargo theft and ensure the safety of supply chain workers and the goods that they deliver.

Finally, Congress must eliminate the 12% Federal Excise Tax on new trucks and trailers that creates a disincentive to purchasing and deploying equipment with the latest safety and emissions technologies. We are grateful to Subcommittee Member Cardin for his continued leadership on this important issue and sponsorship of the *Modern, Clean, and Safe Trucks Act*, S. 694. According to statistics from USDOT, 95.7% of private and for-hire motor carriers operate 10 or fewer trucks and 99.7% operate fewer than 100 trucks.<sup>22</sup> A 2022 ATRI survey of the industry found that fuel costs (22%), equipment and lease payments (15%), and repair and maintenance costs (9%) account for 46%—nearly half—of the overall operating costs for trucking companies nationwide.<sup>23</sup> Surging fuel and truck prices, as well as the deployment of new technologies that are difficult for fleets to maintain, create enormous headwinds that

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<sup>22</sup>ATA *Economics and Industry Data*. American Trucking Associations, 2022. Available online at: <https://www.trucking.org/economics-and-industry-data>

<sup>23</sup> *An Analysis of the Operational Costs of Trucking: 2022 Update*. American Transportation Research Institute, August 2022.



stymie efforts to incentivize fleets to invest in newer, cleaner, safer equipment. Adding a 12% federal surcharge—which amounts to an additional \$25,000 to the cost of new equipment on average—is a significant disincentive. This tax is anti-safety and should be abolished.

### **Conclusion**

On behalf of the more than eight million people in the trucking industry who keep the wheels of our economy turning, thank you once again for the opportunity to testify before this Subcommittee on these important issues. Trucking is the dynamic linchpin of the U.S. economy, and as I have emphasized in my testimony, the industry can only be as safe and efficient as the roads and bridges upon which we operate. I look forward to answering your questions, and the entire trucking industry looks forward to advocating for commonsense investments and improvements that will make our nation's highways safer for all road users.