

CTPAC-SC PROPOSAL

SUBJECT: Kingpin Allowance Uniformity

DATE: November 12, 2003

POLICY: CTPAC WG7 111203-002

I. OBJECTIVE

To change the existing kingpin measurement requirements for specialized lowbed trailers to allow a more uniform and less restrictive limit.

II. BACKGROUND

In the California vehicle code, the maximum kingpin settings are set fourth in section 35400 Maximum Vehicle Length: General limitations. The provisions of this regulation cause an undue burden on the heavy and specialized transportation industry and are inconsistent with other states' established requirements. Most states do not have a kingpin length requirement however of those that do, California is the most restrictive. Only two of the western (WASHTO) states have kingpin requirements', California and Utah.

During the past 10 years and more so in the recent few years, there has been increasing influence by permit writers to impose legal constraints on the movement of extralegal loads. The requirement to meet the 40' kingpin restriction limits the usable deck space of a lowbed trailer to about 20 feet. After the 70's, as machines, components, and fabricated items grew; non-reducible loads meeting C.V.C. 320.5 became larger, longer, and heavier. During this time frame, Caltrans agreed to be less restrictive as it related to the kingpin dimension for all trailers, especially 7 and 9-axle combinations semi-trailer transporting these loads. With the advent of various Federal Mandates to insure uniformity on the Federal Highway system it became more visible to permit, writers and they began to question the need to control kingpin dimensions on all other State Highways. This contraindicates the Federal Governments desire for uniformity where safety is no in jeopardy. Caltrans long ago with industry's acceptance agreed not to dictate how low a lowbed trailer had to be in it's deck height.

III. EXISTING DOCUMENTATION

A. Transportation Permit Manual

The Caltrans Instructional manuals states that the purpose is to provide uniform policy and procedures to Department personnel in the issuance of transportation permits for the movement of extralegal vehicles and/or loads over California state highways. It further states that it is consistent with the goals of protecting the publics' investment in the transportation in infrastructure and ensuring safety of the traveling public.

The weight limitations and other restriction are intended to protect the publics' interest. However, an analysis of a specific vehicle or load may indicate that it is both safe and economically beneficial to deviate from or exceed those guidelines. Therefore, a procedure for appeals and variances is available. The Department of Transportation has the discretionary authority to issue special permits for the movement of vehicles/loads exceeding statutory limitations on the size, weight, and loading of vehicles contained in Division 15 of the California Vehicle Code.

B. California Vehicle Code (CVC)

The designation of the kingpin requirements are stated under **Section 35400 Maximum Vehicle Length: General Limitation, (a) No vehicle shall exceed a length of 40 feet (b) This section does not apply to any of the following: (4)** A semi-trailer while being towed by a motor truck or truck tractor, if the distance from the kingpin to the rearmost axle of the semi-trailer does not exceed 40 feet for semi-trailers having two or more axles, or 38 feet for semi-trailers having one axle if the semi-trailer does not, exclusive of attachments, extend forward of the rear of the cab of the motor truck or truck tractor. However, the code has various "exceptions" plus there are Federal exemptions' (Bio-Waste, livestock, motor sports, etc., + household goods and vehicle transporters).

IV. CURRENT PRACTICE

The current practice of Caltrans is to apply this kingpin requirement as the standard. The practical application depends on special interest and enforcement entities, which varies throughout the state. Single-trip permits are available if proof is given the load requires the trailer deck length. Permits are also available for other loads if there is a conforming load for one leg of the trip. Annual permits are not currently available.

V. PROPOSED CHANGES

A. Transport Permit Manual

This proposal seeks to change issuance of permits with recognition of an increased kingpin measurement standard to establish a more uniform and reasonable measurement consistent with industry specialized equipment being manufactured and commonly used in the oversized/overweight transportation industry.

B. California Vehicles Code

This proposal seeks to change Section 35400; Minimum Vehicle Length: General Limitation (a) No vehicle shall exceed a length of 40 feet. (b) This section does not apply to any of the following: (4) A semi-trailer while being towed by a motor truck or truck tractor, if the distance from the kingpin to the rearmost axle of the semi-trailer does not exceed 40 feet for semi-trailers having two or more axles, or 38 feet for semi-trailers having one axle is the semi-trailer does not, exclusive of attachments, extend forward of the rear of the cab of the motor truck or truck tractor.

The requested change is as follows: For all semi-trailers consisting of 2 or 3 axles the kingpin measurement shall be from the point of attachment (kingpin location) to the center of the semi-trailer axle group. This length shall not exceed 43 feet. For semi-trailers with a spread 2 axle group the measurement shall also be to the center of the group but shall not exceed 41 feet.

VI. BENEFITS / IMPACT / JUSTIFICATION

The severe limitations of the existing Caltrans kingpin standard create inefficiencies for motor carriers and shippers moving freight in California. These are the most restrictive requirements in the country. The vast majority of equipment in the specialized industry does not meet California requirements and this places an unnecessary burden on the industry. Shorter kingpin requirements result in artificially high trailer loadings, which are not consistent with present bridge requirements, which mandate longer lengths. A more moderate requirement would allow better weight distribution and allow industry achievable, reasonable kingpin settings.

Caltrans does not decide how low a trailer deck should be, why should they determine how long it can be. Their main concern should be with the protection of the infrastructure, therefore single-trip and annual permits should be issued to these trailers. The benefits of granting this change would improve compliance, improve safety, reduce cost to industry and related businesses, and would increase efficiencies by reducing equipment changes by interstate carriers at the ports of entry into California and give them the ability to transport other loads on the return trip. Efforts to develop more uniformity, whenever possible, in the movement of products adds to productivity and reduces unnecessary costs. Attached is a list of existing kingpin requirements, further indicating the complexities of compliance while trying to move products interstate.

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