

Safety Rest Area Report: Implemented or Planned Changes to Safety Rest Area Operations

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As required in SHB 1655, Section 2 (3), this is a report to the transportation committees of the Washington State Legislature regarding recommendations related to commercial vehicle parking at state-owned safety rest areas.

Background

Just as it is a challenge nationally, Washington lacks adequate safe, reliably available commercial truck parking, especially on major corridors. Safety Rest Areas are one component of the larger truck parking issue and truck parking needs are one of the priorities addressed through the Safety Rest Area strategic plan currently underway.

In the fall of 2021, WSDOT began efforts to build out a Safety Rest Area strategic plan. Truck Parking is a focused concern for the Safety Rest Area strategic plan. Public rest areas alone cannot meet all truck parking needs in the state, but the strategic planning process, followed by targeted investments, could provide additional capacity to address the freight community's growing needs.

The Strategic Plan is anticipated to be released by the end of the 2021-2023 biennium. The following is a summary of progress to date related to truck parking.

Washington Truck Parking Needs

- Nationally, there is just one parking space for every 11 truckers. Roughly 98% of truckers have difficulty finding safe parking.²
- 60% percent of respondents from a *WSDOT Truck Parking survey* reported it takes an hour or longer to find overnight parking.¹ When safety rest areas are over capacity, undesignated truck parking occurs on rest areas on/off ramps, corridor shoulders, and in RV and passenger vehicle spaces.
- According to the *2021 Joint Transportation Committee Truck Parking Action Plan*, participants identified a lack of available truck parking near urban areas, near mountain passes, and at state borders.
- Communication is critical to commercial truck drivers. A need for improved communication with drivers about truck parking options was identified as part of the *WA Truck Parking Assessment*¹ "Undesignated truck parking often occurs when truck drivers have irregular schedules and routes, leaving them without the knowledge of when and where to look for legal truck parking." In addition, drivers may continue to drive while fatigued when they are unable to find parking. Nationally, fatigue is a contributing factor in 16 percent of truck collisions and 8 percent of fatal truck collisions, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).¹
- The Women of Trucking Advisory board has reported safety as a major concern for female drivers. The industry has seen the number of female drivers double between 2010 and 2021.² A national poll of female truck drivers indicated that 33 percent of female commercial drivers have been inappropriately touched. Survey respondents would like to see facilities with better lighting, security, and additional parking.²
- Safety Rest Area strategic planning public response survey themes from commercial drivers included:
 - There is not currently enough parking at night in most Safety Rest Areas.

- Facility designs were not made for female drivers, with restrooms located further from the commercial truck driving lots and lack of security and lighting.
- Washington rest areas should have more staffing to support cleaning and safety. WA lacks the same levels of staffing and security that is present in locations in other states in the US.¹

Recommendations

These are initial strategies under consideration for truck parking and there will be comprehensive recommendations included in the final Safety Rest Area Strategic Plan.

Summary of strategies under consideration for truck parking
<p>Pilot alternative Safety Rest Area formats to increase safety and support the needs of the primary user groups for each Safety Rest Area. This will enable the program to effectively support all user groups. Pilot considerations include an urban rest area format and a truck parking-only pilot to expand truck parking. *</p> <p>*Safety Rest Area pilot locations are being identified and will be communicated with the draft of the plan.</p>
<p>Seek truck parking expansion opportunities in locations that support the greatest need for commercial truck drivers. *</p> <p>*An initial assessment will be included with the Strategic plan that lays out the most critical locations for the commercial truck driving community where parking expansion may be possible. Assessment factors include existing Safety Rest Area parking space count, truck parking availability and truck parking demand based on commercial driver survey responses, truck parking alternative locations within a 30-mile radius of existing Safety Rest Area locations, whether it is possible to expand with water rights and septic systems, and whether the Safety Rest Areas are located on a major economic corridor.</p>
<p>To improve communication with Commercial Drivers, we are considering the following updates: adding communication networking, cameras, and safety & security reporting equipment, commercial truck parking management system (TPMS), and information to the traveling public.</p>
<p>To support commercial truck driver safety, we recommend evaluating and updating lighting, overgrown landscaping, and signage.</p>

¹ [2022 Washington Truck Parking Assessment](#)

² [Harassment of Women Truckers Spurs Drivers, Agency to Seek Fixes](#), Bloomberg Law, December 2022

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¹ Responses come from commercial truck drivers in the Safety Rest Area public survey to the question: What changes would most improve the Safety Rest Areas? Based on data compiled from multiple DOTs including Arizona, Texas, Illinois, Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, and Louisiana.