

HIGHWAY TRANSPORT ISSUES, Henrik E. Stafseth
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Transportation Officials.

The most important issue before Congress today is energy. We have been in a state of concern about energy that dates back before the oil embargo of 1973. At that time, the Administration encouraged the mining of coal and the development of other energy sources to substitute for the imported crude oil which we receive from the Near East that is subject to variation in its flow as different political courses develop in that area.

The President has just announced his latest energy program which contains a call for increased coal production. In the first proposal the President suggested establishing an energy security corporation to develop 2.5 million barrels of synthetic fuel from coal, oil shale, biomasses, and unconventional gases, by 1990. The second proposal is to require our private utility companies to cut oil consumption 50 percent which implies coal substitution. A third proposal, which is unrelated to coal, is to continue the exemption from federal fuel taxes for gasohol. This gives the member departments of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) deep concern. With more fuel efficient cars already causing revenue to drop, the exemption of gasohol would cause an additional loss of revenue creating a hardship to our member departments in maintaining roads. For example, in Iowa, the State Legislature has given a similar exemption for gasohol from its State fuel tax and they are experiencing a loss of a million dollars a month, or 20 percent of the annual revenue.

Maintenance needs have been increased by another problem that the States are facing as a result of the 1973-74 oil embargo. Congress in the 1974 Federal-aid Highway Act, raised the allowable load limit on Interstate highways from 73,280 pounds to 80,000 pounds.

It was recognized by AASHTO, through the results of the Ottawa Road Test, that such an increase would cause a reduction in pavement life of approximately 25 to 40 percent. Those States that changed their gross weight limit to 80,000 pounds have experienced the above estimated loss of life of the pavement. An increase in gross load of several thousand pounds has a dramatic effect on the States and local governments because the shortened life of the pavement can mean resurfacing, or in many cases, reconstruction of existing pavements.

It was reported by the Bureau of Mines that from the year 1950 to 1969, average pay loads for trucks increased from 10.3 tons to 28.5 tons.

A General Accounting Office report indicates a 22 percent violation rate in truck overweights on public highways. Hauling of basic materials, such as coal, is such a competitive business that in order to make a reasonable profit the independent truck owner competing for the haul of such materials is tempted to load his truck to as high a weight as possible without damaging the truck. Some private truck owners that do this type of hauling are very aware of the probability of being caught for violation on an overhaul

and some of them haul overweight loads with the expectation of having to pay fines which will total less than the added revenue. If they have a bad experience where the enforcement is rigid and they receive citations more frequently than they anticipated by their statistical analysis, then they simply plead poverty to the courts and with the possibility of putting a breadwinner out of business, this makes for a difficult decision for our judiciary system.

The States that have experimented with higher fines, stricter enforcement, and all kinds of mechanisms have found that in many cases they have had little success.

The following are examples of types of problems that we have experienced in some of the coal-producing States:

There is a problem in Virginia that the highway department is experiencing in highway truck coal hauls that causes them concerns. The State of Virginia has allowed heavier truck weights in the coal areas on their state roads than in a similar terrain that does not have coal mining. In spite of this privilege, the coal haulers are hauling overloads and are breaking up the state roads in those areas. As a matter of fact, they drive down the right hand side of the road in the daytime and the left hand side in the night time so they break up both sides of the road as a result. Virginia has just passed a law that requires peak holes in the truck dump box which will allow an inspector to visually inspect if the truck is overloaded without having to weight the vehicle.

The State of Kentucky has had problems with coal hauling, one is that the coal trucks are delivering mine coal from Eastern Kentucky coal mines to Wisconsin by way of Louisville, Kentucky, which is an unreasonably long haul. Kentucky, in some cases, has had coal haulers or coal miners that are mindful of the importance of well maintained roads and have given financial assistance to the maintenance of these roads to the mutual benefit of the state and the coal producer. The people of Kentucky have also had coal producers that contribute nothing to the maintenance of the highway and have caused great damage to the public roads.

The energy related problem that Colorado faces is rather unique in that they are not a major coal producing State; however, being a hub of transportation they have long coal trains that are being hauled constantly across the State in certain areas. This has a very disruptive effect on the highway traffic that crosses at grade at railroad crossings.

We would like to call to the attention of this Conference that a study of highway needs to solve energy problems, called for in the Surface Transportation Act of 1976, Section 153, was delivered to Congress in August 1978, by the former Secretary of Transportation, Brock Adams. The goal of the study was to determine if special federal assistance is needed for the transportation of energy resources. The study viewed three areas - coal delivery, roads needed for hauling uranium and oil, and energy induced needs which covered the movement of workers, materials and equipment at energy facility sites. Examples of these sites are power

plants and refineries. Additional travel studied was the travel required for increased population to support new energy activities. The study findings for funding needed between now and 1985 were:

1. \$7.3 billion, or 76 percent of the needs determined were to build or rebuild roads used for coal-hauling.

2. The cost to improve roads for hauling uranium and oil amounted to four percent, or \$400 million.

3. \$1.9 billion, or 20 percent was related to induced highway needs required because of the development of boom towns, power facilities, offshore drillings, and the need for rail/highway crossing improvements.

The needs study was contributed to by 27 States and 88 percent of the haul roads needs were in the Appalachian area. Eight percent of the energy-induced needs were West of the Mississippi. The study concluded that the needs were rather local in nature and would be difficult to fund out of existing highway programs.

There is some assistance for energy haul roads and existing programs and some of those are listed, as follows:

- . The regular Federal-aid highway program, especially those roads on the Primary and Secondary Systems.

- . Other highway programs which have received appropriations from Congress and which could be applied to coal road needs.

- . The abandoned mine reclamation fund, in accordance with the priorities and procedures established in the law.

- . The newly proposed energy impact assistance program (\$150 million per year of grants, loans, and loan guarantees).

- . Appalachian highway funds (the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Department of Transportation are initiating a study of the program, with one potential option being to allocate more funds to coal haul roads.)

The Administration has been thinking of a federal severance tax to approach this problem and, of course, many States use a severance tax to offset local obligations.