

U.S. Senator David Vitter

Town Hall Meeting

July 13, 2015

“Relieving Traffic Congestion and Improving the
Flow of Commerce for Small Businesses.”

Comments submitted on
behalf of the
Louisiana Motor Transport Association



Presented by

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The Texas Transportation Institute's *2012 Urban Mobility Report* found that congestion in 498 U.S. cities cost the economy \$121 billion in 2011, up from an inflation-adjusted \$24 billion in 1982. The report determined that \$27 billion of the 2011 costs were borne by the trucking industry, and passed on to customers and, ultimately, consumers.

I am Randy P. Guillot, co-owner of Triple G Express and Southeastern Motor Freight, Inc. in Jefferson, Louisiana. Our family has been in the trucking business since 1945 when my grandfather started Southeastern Motor Freight, the oldest Louisiana-owned common carrier, in New Orleans. And, since 1985, we have operated Triple G Express which serves the Gulf Coast with Intermodal trucking services.

With my brother Glen – and the fourth generation that is already actively involved in the family business – we manage these two trucking companies that employ a combined total of 125 employees and independent contractors in four terminals in two states.

As a third generation trucker, I have witnessed the evolution of the trucking industry and its growing importance to the development and stability of our local, state and regional economies and our ability to compete in a global marketplace.

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As past Chairman of the Louisiana Motor Transport Association and an Executive Committee and Board member of the American Trucking Associations in Washington, D.C., I have been actively involved in addressing the myriad of issues that impact the growth and efficiency of our industry -- hours of service regulations, the Compliance-Safety-Accountability federal program, the truck driver shortage, etc.

Issues related to the efficient flow of truck traffic include effective incident management policies, sufficient availability of truck parking on the national system, reasonable commercial motor vehicle access to facilities and major industrial corridors, prioritization of freight movements in the highway planning process, adequate highway funding and a focus on congestion mitigation.

With “just in time” delivery becoming more and more important to shippers, the trucking industry must be able to provide reliable and efficient delivery of goods in order to satisfy the demands of the marketplace. To that end, we monitor congestion and incidents that may have a negative impact on our ability to do so.

Incident Management. We fully support Louisiana’s effort to implement a uniform incident management program statewide that trains our law enforcement officials and first responders to improve the management of incidents on our highways. Reducing the impact of incidents by returning traffic to the normal flow after an incident benefits the motoring public and especially the movement of freight.

Freight Movement. Because of the importance of freight movement to our overall economy, it is imperative that we make commercial motor vehicle access and efficiency a priority in our highway planning process. To that end, the Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development (LADOTD) and several local Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have established Freight Advisory Councils to provide a forum to identify issues and recommend ways to improve the free flow of intrastate and interstate freight movements. One example of that collaboration is the directive to include analysis of the types and frequency of truck traffic on routes that are being considered for roundabouts.

With 78% of our communities totally dependent upon trucks for the delivery of their goods and services, it is important that local officials and the general public understand the importance of improving truck access and sharing the road with trucks. The Interstate 12 corridor is a prime example of a major truck route for the southern United States that is also a major commuter route in southeast Louisiana. We have worked very hard with local and state officials to reduce the number of incidents involving commercial motor vehicles and to improve incident management of those incidents especially in that area in order to reduce incident-related congestion on that corridor. With the anticipated residential and commercial growth along that corridor, it is even more important to monitor and identify traffic management strategies that will reduce congestion and facilitate the efficient flow of traffic.

Intermodal Transportation. Louisiana is blessed with a robust intermodal transportation community that allows us to take advantage of our strategic location along the Gulf of Mexico. It is critical that we improve efficiency of port operations if we are to compete with the other ports in the region for foreign and domestic intermodal freight. Although the ports consider themselves merely a “landlord”, they must take a more vital role in directing port operations to allow for greater flexibility and, more importantly, the greater operational efficiency of the facilities at the port with regard to the movement of trucks. For example, the trucking industry would like the Port of New Orleans to change the truck gate operating hours to be expanded to allow for transit during non-peak commuter hours especially with the traffic problems associated with Tchoupitoulous Street downtown and the future expansion of the convention center. Several southern ports have expanded their operating hours to avoid peak travel times in urban congested areas.

Highway Funding. With trucks transporting 63% of total manufactured tonnage in Louisiana, the one issue of the utmost importance to the trucking industry is maintaining a viable and efficient local, state and national integrated transportation system with adequate funding to support long term growth and productivity through improved mobility.

The Louisiana Motor Transport Association (LMTA) has long been on record in support of creating a fair and equitable highway funding program on the both the state and federal level. All things considered, we believe that the fuel tax is still the most equitable means of funding for highways – all highway users pay the tax as it is collected at the pump.

[NOTE: The LMTA does not support automatic increases in the fuel tax on an annual basis – or indexing the fuel tax to CPI – nor do we support allowing larger, heavier trucks on the interstate system. However, the American Trucking Associations (ATA) does have conditional support for the indexing of Federal motor fuel taxes and also supports increasing the size and weight of trucks allowed on the interstate.]

The trucking industry in Louisiana will support a long term strategic plan with specific objectives that includes a funding mechanism that is based on equity, accountability and a reasonable expectation that the proceeds will be dedicated to the highway infrastructure – concrete, asphalt and bridges.

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Celebrating its 75th anniversary, the Louisiana Motor Transport Association is the non-profit trade association representing the trucking industry in Louisiana. The organization includes every type of truck operation and type of vehicle: regulated and exempt, for-hire and private, interstate and intrastate, one-truck operators and large fleets who operate straight trucks, semi-trailers, tank trucks, flat-beds, intermodal, refrigerated trucks, etc. that are primarily over 10,000 lb. and subject to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. The trucking industry reflects a very broad and very diverse population and with approximately 85% of the companies operating ten trucks or less.