Lehigh Valley Truck Parking Action Plan

December 2, 2020
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The Trexler Plaza Truck Stop in Upper Macungie Township is frequently overflowing, forcing drivers to park in fire lanes and along exit ramps.
Introduction

Truck parking has become a growing issue nationally, as tractor-trailer drivers scrambling to meet federal driving hours mandates are pulling along roads, onto exit ramps, into unauthorized lots and in some cases into dark, unsafe areas because there is no designated place for them to park while they wait to drop off loads or rest.

The problem is particularly profound in the Lehigh Valley, where freight movement and warehouse development have exploded over the past decade to handle the increasing demand of online shopping and two-day delivery in a region located within a single trucker’s shift of 100 million consumers.

Most warehouse facilities don’t allow drivers to arrive before their pick-up window or remain on site after the delivery, forcing drivers to seek parking wherever they can find it – legally or illegally. The daily chore of searching for parking costs money and slows delivery, too. Driver and communities suffer, as a result. Coupled with extreme weather events that close roads with little or no warning, a lack of truck parking is a safety and emergency management concern for everyone.

Even as the COVID-19 Pandemic showed how important it is to keep the supply lines moving smoothly, nearly 60 public and private freight industry stakeholders gathered for two days in August for the Lehigh Valley Truck Parking Roundtable to define the problems and devise actions that can be applied not only in this region, but nationwide.

What follows are the issues, actions and opportunities identified during the virtual event hosted by the Federal Highway Administration, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS).

Attendees

The Truck Parking Roundtable was divided into three sessions over two days attended by nearly 60 people. Included below are some of the key stakeholders who participated:

- American Transportation Research Institute
- Bethlehem City
- Bucks County Planning Commission
- CBRE Group
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- East Allen Township
- Forks Township
- Hanover Township, Northampton County
- Jaindl Properties
- Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority
- Lehigh County
- Lehigh Valley Traffic Club
- Majestic Realty Company
- Michael Baker International
- Monroe County Planning Commission
- New Jersey Department of Transportation
- New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
- NFI Industries
- North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
- Northampton County
- Northeastern Planning Alliance
- Palmer Township
- Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association
- Pennsylvania State Police
- Sheetz Incorporated
- Tatamy Borough
- Upper Macungie Township
- Weisenberg Township
- Whitehall Township
- XPO Logistics
## Issues and Challenges

<table>
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<th>Issues and Challenges</th>
<th>Safety (Commercial Trucking and Passenger Vehicle)</th>
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## Action Items and Opportunities

- Leverage the WorkshopLV: Freight Advisory Committee as a task force for truck parking
- Identify Opportunities for New Travel Centers
- Explore the Potential of Unused and Underutilized Parking Locations (e.g. rest stops, sporting facilities, park + ride lots)
- Real-Time Parking Availability, Digital Signage and In-Device Messaging
- Expanded Mobile Technologies Tailored to the Trucking + Logistics Industries (e.g. cell phone applications)
- Guidance Document of Best Practices to Guide Effective Parking Facilities for Municipalities and Industrial Landowners
- Community Public Education Campaign for Awareness of the Importance of Trucking + Freight
- Multi-Use Potential for Combined Truck Parking and Driver Training Locations
- Training Program for Municipal Leaders on the Needs of the Freight + Logistics Industry
- Enhanced Data Sharing between Commonwealth, “Big-Data”, Metropolitan Planning Organizations + Local Governments
- Coordination with the Insurance Industry and Agencies
- Continued Focus on Regional + Subregional Transportation System Coordination + Partnerships
- Include Freight Industry in Hazard Mitigation Planning
Lehigh Valley Truck Parking
2020 and Beyond

A theme that emerged from the Lehigh Valley Truck Parking Roundtable was the idea that it would take a coordinated effort involving government, industry, public and private stakeholders to identify the region’s truck parking issues and find solutions for them. The Lehigh Valley Transportation Study, WorkshopLV: Freight Advisory Committee is an established entity that may serve as a conduit for future efforts to create a cohesive truck parking strategy.
This Wawa Truck Parking Facility in Upper Macungie Township is one of several provided by private companies such as Walmart, Sunoco and Speedway, that are trying to fill the parking void. With space limited, this facility posts a 30-minute maximum stay for trucks.

### Short-Term Opportunities

- Actively recruit new stakeholders to the WorkshopLV: Freight Advisory Committee.
- Continue coordination and data sharing with neighboring and transportation network-linked Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO).
- Include a recommendation for driver amenities and onsite parking in all land development reviews that involve freight.
- Engage elected officials of all levels to support funding a localized study to create a long-term truck parking strategy.
- Compile a depository of existing truck parking best practices.
These trucks are parked illegally along Main Street in Palmer Township, at the Route 33 interchange. Drivers often use the street’s shoulder to rest or wait for their trailers to be unloaded at the nearby Amazon warehouse because most facilities do not allow drivers to arrive before their scheduled delivery time. Drivers and the community are negatively impacted.

LVPC file photo

Mid-Term Opportunities

- Identify potential locations for new truck parking facilities.
- Research the available inventory of underused parking facilities at sport venues and other large parking facilities that may be able to accommodate truck parking.
- Research various national examples of public-private partnerships for alternative funding revenues that support truck parking.
- Update the database of freight and logistics generators and include current available parking facilities.
- Develop a municipal officials education program on warehousing and logistics parking requirements and best practices, including guidance on truck parking.
Long-Term Opportunities

- Determine if modifications to existing PennDOT-owned “Park & Ride” facilities can create additional truck parking spaces for overnight, emergency parking or daily use.

- Include the installation of variable message boards with real-time parking conditions in the state Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP).

- Continue multi-state truck parking initiatives that support the freight industries role in the economy and national security.

- Elevate the dialogue with Federal and Commonwealth elected officials to support funding opportunities to enhance existing truck parking facilities and create new facilities to enable a safe and secure logistics transportation network.

- Encourage the creation of cooperatives between municipalities, the business community and the public to develop understanding and trust supporting solutions and the ability to adapt as our logistics industry evolves.

- Include emergency truck parking scenarios, particularly those involving weather, in hazard mitigation planning.

This Sheetz Truck Stop is under construction at Route 863 and Interstate 78 in Weisenberg Township. It will include 31 truck parking spaces. This is a good example of how an existing gas station near an industrial district can be redeveloped to support safe, secure truck parking.
Conclusion

Adequate, safe and secure truck parking will remain an issue as long as goods are made, purchased and moved, and emergencies such as snow storms and even pandemics cause disruptions in the supply chain. Working on resolving these issues as they arise and evolve is a collaborative process between industrial sites, the trucking industry, truck stop operators, police, emergency management services, departments of transportation, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations and the public. Solutions are public, private and public-private, reenforcing the fact that everyone owns our truck parking issues because they impact virtually everyone. We are in this as a team and will address these challenges as one team. The Lehigh Valley Truck Parking Roundtable has taken us several steps forward in reaching our truck parking goals.

If you would like to participate in the truck parking efforts Regionally, contact:

• The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission at 610-264-4544, planning@lvpc.org and lvpc.org

• Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Director of The Center of Program Development and Management Brian Hare, at 717-783-9359, bhare@pa.gov

• US Department of Transportation, Freight Management Operations Specialist Jeff Purdy, at 202-366-6993, jeff.purdy@dot.gov
We would like to thank all of the participants of the Lehigh Valley Truck Parking Roundtable:

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