



RHODE ISLAND TRUCKING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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April 2, 2024

Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chairman – House Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island House
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: **OPPOSITION** to 2024-H-7658

Chairman Casey:

The subject legislation, H-7658, proposes to restrict a one-mile stretch of Rte. 114A/Pleasant Street to through truck traffic travelling to points in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The bill, which passed both the House and Senate Committees in 2023 without any level of due diligence, was summarily vetoed by Governor McKee. I have attached the governor's veto message for your review and consideration.

As representative of the interests of 500 member companies – mostly Rhode Island small business owners who operate commercial vehicles – I find the timing and intent of this proposed legislation particularly concerning given the infrastructure crisis brought about by Washington Bridge and the resulting supply chain challenges our industry is facing. Since December, traffic and congestion have added to our supply chain burden and, as a result, the maintenance of all legal freight routes is critical - especially at this juncture. In just a few weeks, all permitted commercial vehicles will be prohibited from crossing the bridge due to the new six lane configuration on the eastbound span of the bridge. This will further contract our capacity and limit our routing options necessitating passage of trucks on secondary roads.

In closing, I have enclosed an opinion piece from this past Sunday's edition of the Providence Journal which I believe best captures the predicament of our industry. The Rhode Island Trucking Association, its members and the trucking industry at large vehemently oppose H-7658 and hope that this body considers these sentiments as you weigh the negative consequences and burdens this legislation places upon our state's supply chain, its businesses, and its consumers.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris J. Maxwell".

Christopher J. Maxwell
President & CEO
Rhode Island Trucking Association, Inc.



EXCLUSIVE R.I. AFFILIATE

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE

June 24, 2023

TO THE HONORABLE, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

In accordance with the provisions of article IX, section 14 of the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island and section 43-1-4 of the Rhode Island General Laws, I transmit, with my disapproval, 2023-H 5206 – “An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles – Size, Weight and Load Limits – Weight Restrictions on Route 114 A East Providence.”

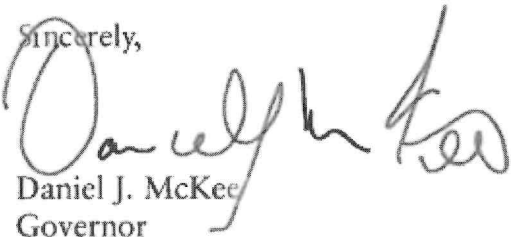
This legislation would impose restrictions, by weight, on certain commercial vehicles operating on Route 114 A in East Providence between Pawtucket Avenue and the Massachusetts state line. This legislation also imposes a fine for anyone who violates its provisions.

Route 114 A is a state highway. Decisions to restrict or exclude certain vehicles from state highways and bridges on the basis of weight are made by the State Traffic Commission. R.I. Gen. Laws § 31-25-27. In deciding to restrict access to such facilities by weight, the Traffic Commission relies on deficiencies documented by a safety inspection or load rating. Federal law prohibits any state from enacting or enforcing laws denying these commercial vehicles reasonable access to the “national network” of roads of which Route 114 A is a part. 23 C.F.R § 658.19 (Reasonable Access).

The weight restriction on commercial vehicles proposed by this legislation do not come from the Traffic Commission and they do not arise from a public safety study. Indeed, there does not seem to be any public safety rationale for the measure. I respect the concerns of neighbors who support this legislation. But without using the proper statutory procedure for limiting access to the East Providence portion of Route 114 A and without the appropriate supporting safety study, this measure would likely violate federal reasonable access laws.

For this reason, I disapprove of this legislation and respectfully urge your support of this veto.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. McKee
Governor

Sunday letters: Truckers and highways; a murderer in Warwick

Truckers need their voice heard, too

The trucking industry's new tagline is "Nothing Without Trucks." Some of Rhode Island's leaders would be wise to take stock in these three words.

The sudden and unexpected closure of the westbound span of the Washington Bridge affected all of us – the travelling public, local small businesses – especially those in areas of Providence, East Providence and the East Bay – and yes, trucking. You haven't heard much from trucking as our industry – the fuel haulers, the milk haulers, the food haulers and the medicine haulers – have been too busy negotiating time delays, route adjustments and overall capacity challenges brought on by the westbound closure.

The supply chain crisis will soon escalate to new heights when the new six lane configuration reduces truck lane width to a near unmanageable 11 feet and forces legally-permitted oversized and overweight vehicles off the interstate and onto secondary roads.

Fortunately, the Rhode Island Trucking Association and RIDOT are in daily contact to ensure that our industry is fully informed and fully heard on this issue. We thank them for their professionalism.

Unfortunately, some municipalities are taking a hammer to trucking rather than engaging with industry stakeholders to discuss strategies and outcomes beneficial to all. The next 2 to 3 years will, no doubt, be painful, as Rhode Islanders weather the Washington Bridge crisis. It will not be easy, but it will be much easier, much safer and much less painful to all if we talk, band together, and come up with logical solutions.

Our industry's professional drivers have no more of a desire to be in places and predicaments not of their choosing than any of us, but we've all been dealt a hand. Pointing fingers, creating laws and vilifying innocent parties will only serve to create impasses much greater than a decaying old bridge could ever create. Let's talk....

Remember – "Nothing Without Trucks."

Chris Maxwell, president and CEO, Rhode Island Trucking Association