

CTPAC- PROPOSAL

SUBJECT: Tridem 60,000 lbs

DATE: November 12, 2003

POLICY: CTPAC WG4 111203-002

I. OBJECTIVE

To increase the allowable weight loads on tridem axles to 60,000 pounds for routine permit issuance. To obtain almost equal weight allowances for both tridem and trunnion configurations. To increase transportation efficiencies and promote safety and there by eliminate unnecessary transloading at the California border.

II. BACKGROUND

In California, the standard maximum allowable weight for tridem configurations is 52,500 pounds depending upon axle spacing. The maximum allowable weight for 2 axle trunnion configurations is 60,000. The vast majority of the WASHTO and other states presently permit 60,000 pounds on tridems. California had not given in the past any additional weight for a third axle in the overweight charts'.

III. EXISTING DOCUMENTATION

A. Transportation Permit Manual

The manual states that the purpose is to provide uniform policy and procedures to Department personnel in the issuance of transportation permits for the movement of extralegal vehicles and/or loads over California state highways. It further states that it is consistent with the goals of protecting the public's investment in the transportation infrastructure and ensuring safety of the traveling public.

The weight limitation and other restrictions are intended to protect the public's interest. However, an analysis of a specific vehicle or load may

indicate that it is in the public's interest to deviate from, or exceed, those guidelines. Therefore, a procedure for appeals and variances is available.

The Department of Transportation has the discretionary authority to issue special permits for the movement of vehicles/loads exceeding statutory limitations on the size, weight, and loading of vehicles contained in Division 15 of the California Vehicle Code.

Section 304 of the Permit Manual, Rating Classification states, in part, if the semi-trailer was equipped with a tridem, it would still be viewed as one loading group and assigned a number of two (2) for axle count and still given a five (5) axle rating.

B. California Vehicle Code (CVC)

There is no change requested to the Vehicle Code for this proposal, however it should be noted that currently additional weight is allowed when there are three axles versus two axles in a group with the same spacing.

IV. CURRENT PRACTICE

The current practice of Caltrans is to apply a standard that views semi trailers equipped with tridem as one loading group and assigned a number two (2) for axle count giving no additional weight allowance for the third axle and still be given a five (5) axle rating. This in effect limits tridems to 52,500# depending upon axle spacing.

V. PROPOSED CHANGES

A. Transportation Permit Manual

This proposal seeks to change issuance of permits with recognition of increased and more equal weight for both tridem and trunnion configurations. This standard would establish a more uniform allowance consistent with the need to establish and maintain uniformity in laws, regulations, and practices based upon safety, freight mobility, regulatory uniformity, and industry productivity. A 15% bonus will be granted when there is 3 axles' in the loading group, where bridges do not allow bonus weights; these groups would revert to straight weight.

VI. BENEFITS / IMPACT / JUSTIFICATION

This issue has been studied for more than five years as part of an effort to promote uniformity throughout the WASHTO states. Arguments and research have been credibly presented that suggest 60,000 pounds for both configurations does not produce any significant damage to the highway infrastructure. There are also arguments to the contrary. Both of these arguments are inclusive of bridges.

However, what the academic, administrative and industry interest can agree upon is that the current lack of uniformity causes confusion and inefficient equipment utilization. Today 39 of the 48 contiguous continental states recognize tridems as viable suspension systems, which do not impose undue damage to highways or structures when limited to 60,000 pounds per tridem.

The benefits of granting this change would improve compliance, improve safety, reduce cost to industry and related businesses, and would increase efficiencies by reducing equipment changes by interstate carriers at ports of entry into California. Efforts to develop more uniformity, wherever possible, in the movement of products adds to productivity and reduces unnecessary cost.

Consistent with efforts to promote uniformity in laws, regulations and practices it would be appropriate to approve reasonably equal weight allowances for both tridem and trunnion axle configurations when used in interstate transportation.

Where bridge structures have acceptable integrity, a tridem axle group would receive a 15% bonus rating thus increasing the maximum allowable permitted weight from 50,400# to 57,960#, for a group with 8' spacing and from 52,238# to 60,000 for a group with 9'9" spacing when using the maximum (purple) weight category. No additional weight above 60,000 would be granted for a 3 axle, 4 tires per axle load group regardless of additional axle spacing. See weight charts for exact weights.

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