

MCSAC Task 21-1: Supply Chain and CMV Driver Recruitment and Retention Discussion Notes from July 20, 2021, MCSAC Meeting

Introduction

In Task 21-1, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) directed the Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee (MCSAC) to discuss the challenges associated with driver recruitment and retention for meeting the demands of the supply chain. The Agency asked MCSAC to consider available information in developing recommendations concerning government and private-sector actions that should be considered to maximize efforts to recruit and retain experienced talent.

Discussion on the Supply Chain and CMV Driver Recruitment and Retention

A. The pandemic revealed weaknesses in the supply chain. Government and stakeholders worked together to keep the supply chain intact, with challenges.

B. The Secretary of Transportation held a roundtable that included the Secretary of Labor to solicit thoughts and suggestions on supply chain and driver recruitment and retention (early July). MCSAC expounds upon the following summary notes from the roundtable:

1. Equipping CMVs with advanced safety technology, specifically Automatic Emergency Brakes

- (1) Several stakeholders support the advanced safety technologies that FMCSA promotes.
- (2) Several stakeholders raised concerns that drivers may become overly reliant on this technology.
- (3) Alerts help, but technology that takes away control from the driver is concerning. If a driver needs to intervene, sometimes there may not be adequate time to do so.
- (4) Misinformation about these technologies exists. However, research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) suggests that these technologies are safe.
- (5) Several stakeholders reported that some drivers may mistrust the technology.
- (6) Some drivers have apprehension about using AEB on slick roads.
- (7) It is important to ensure accurate information on this technology is available, such as its benefits, advantages, and limitations.
- (8) Technology takes over when the driver fails because humans make mistakes. Could lead to preventing accidents.
- (9) Industry should take advantage of existing technologies, such as speed limiters.
- (10) Automated manual transmissions have been accepted by drivers; many drivers have come to like them and see that they extend their longevity in the industry.

- (11) AEBs and adaptive cruise control have improved greatly, with 50% or greater reduction in rear end accidents, reduced injuries/fatalities. Drivers must stay properly trained as the technology evolves.
 - (12) Stakeholders report that drivers are concerned that animals or other roadway obstacles will activate technologies. One committee member indicated that the technologies have advanced so this is no longer a problem.
 - (13) Lane assist is a technology that should remain a priority technology to be used as it will force a vehicle to maintain its lane when the vehicle is on cruise control or if an emergency occurs.
 - (14) Technology is not a panacea but has its benefits. Can be used to ensure vehicles are in good working order
2. **Ensuring driver's vehicles are in good working order**
- (1) Drivers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the equipment is in good repair. Drivers may be ticketed when equipment failures occur while on the road, even if they were unaware of the failure. Too much of the burden lies on the driver.
 - (2) As vehicle technologies advance, it becomes more difficult to ensure that equipment is in good working order.
 - (a) Newer vehicles have pre-trip inspection technology that will pre-trip the truck, but the driver must manually inspect brakes.
 - (b) Brake rear sensors can tell when it is time to change the brakes.
 - (c) Vehicle inspection report – drivers fill this out. Must use technology properly.
 - (d) Penalizing drivers for failure to perform the pre-trip inspection may motivate them to comply with this requirement. Some drivers develop a habit of not completing the pre-trip inspection for reasons such as poor weather conditions. Newer drivers, in particular, may require training on the need to perform the inspection. Anomalies are not driver's fault, but if it happens repeatedly, it may suggest that there is a problem with the preventive maintenance program.
 - (e) Drivers may be pressured to use a vehicle that is not in good repair.
 - (3) The main reason trucks taken OOS is brakes are out of order.
 - (a) A stakeholder recommended that the CVSA refrain from announcing when Brake Safety Week will occur. CVSA holds Brake Safety Week each year, as well as an unannounced Brake Safety Day.
 - (b) The penalty/fine does not appear to serve as a disincentive. It may need to be increased.
 - (4) Drivers are held accountable for ease of enforcement, even if driver has not done anything wrong. How may are trained on the regulations they are held responsible for following? Are drivers paid for inspection time?

- (5) Air conditioning is especially important as the country experiences high temperature extremes as a result of climate changes.
 - (6) SAFER data on vehicle maintenance helped drivers make choices concerning working for specific carriers. A member of the public noted that there needs to be more transparency on the FMCSA and CSA websites.
3. **Providing ample truck parking and rest areas in key locations.**
- (1) There is a need for data on crashes caused by drivers being unable to find a parking space. Stakeholders are unable to locate this data, but it would be helpful to further investigate this issue. FMCSA will check on this offline.
 - (2) Many rest stops are currently closed and there needs to be higher prioritization on keeping rest stops open and safe.
 - (a) During the pandemic, many states closed all rest areas.
 - (i) There continues to be limited service hours in some areas.
 - (ii) These decisions are made by states. Some states some have restrictions on “commercial activity” in rest areas. Food trucks are not allowed in rest areas in some states. Some states are easier to work with than others.
 - (b) Stakeholders discussed using closed weigh stations for additional truck parking.
 - (i) In some states, entrances are blocked, or drivers are not permitted to park.
 - (ii) Some drivers are hesitant to park at weigh stations for fear of being inspected.
 - (3) Additional parking may be available by using on-ramps on some highways. Some drivers do not feel safe parking on a ramp, some would see it as better than parking on the shoulder.
4. **Improving the content of training**
- (1) Training is a key component based on feedback.
 - (a) Comprehensive driver training is needed. Topics should include driver health, safety, and training on working in the industry from business perspective.
 - (b) Drivers need training upon entering the industry, and continuous training to upgrade their skills.
 - (2) Training standards must be enforced.
 - (a) Some programs provide training to transportation workers who are under 21 years old. These workers are taught how to work in the trucking industry from the dock perspective, i.e., operating a forklift, load segregation, load securement, driving on ranges and on the yard, hazardous materials. Then they transition to on-the-road training after they obtain the CDLP.

- (b) When they turn 21, the driver candidates (apprentices) obtain the CDL and begin driving in local operations and transition to over-the-road driving when they obtain sufficient seniority to bid those positions.
- (3) Entry level driver training rulemaking was conducted by the FMCSA and a notice was recently issued to extend the implementation date for the rule. The Rule will go into effect on 2/7/2022.
 - (a) Training providers can start registering now.
 - (b) SDLAs have failed to meet the deadlines for implementing the requirements of the Rule. SDLAs should be instructed to finalize their deliverables. The Agency is working on ensuring that there are no further delays.
 - (c) A Final rule on Entry-Level Driver Training was published in 2016. The rule does not require a specific number of training hours behind the wheel, but students must demonstrate proficiency in the required driving skills.
 - (d) There is a perceived driver shortage.
 - (e) Stakeholders acknowledged that more training is needed but with increased training are increased costs. Students and carriers do not want to bear the additional costs.
- (4) Stakeholders reported that driving schools are experiencing a shortage of trainers, as some are going back to driving due to opportunities for increased compensation.
 - (a) Stakeholders recommended consulting with schools to find out if there is a need for revisions to trainer qualification standards. Can they conduct training without a valid medical certificate?
 - (b) There is a concern that the cost of driver training may be a barrier to some students. Some larger carriers assist with training, but smaller carriers may not be able to assist.
 - (i) Should federal/state funding be provided to support driver training?
 - (ii) Can DOL help?
- (5) There are gaps in safety training. Drivers trained in one state, may not get important training that would be relevant in another state. Expanding endorsements may resolve this issue. For example, it may be appropriate to require a “mountain driving” endorsement.
- (6) Some carriers have their own schools. These carriers may pay tuition if the driver works with them for a specified time period, e.g., 1 year.
- (7) Oftentimes, new drivers receive training, then the CDL, and gets bad job, which may have an adverse impact on driver retention.

- (a) Company-sponsored training is some of the worst (not high level), and they advertise the most, attracting more new drivers.
- (b) The level of experience required for instructors is insufficient. Training is often limited to a student driving the truck and the instructor in the sleeper berth. This practice should be corrected.
- (8) There is a need for qualified instructors, appropriate curriculum, geographic-specific training/endorsements; and testing and screening to determine the interviewee has the necessary personality traits and soft skills to work as a commercial driver.
 - (a) Joyce Brenny, for example, utilizes a training model that includes such screening and testing.
 - (b) There are tests available to address the personality screening need, but its use could deter carriers from hiring people who genuinely want to be in industry – double edged sword.
 - (c) As stakeholder suggested that it may be appropriate to encourage personality testing, especially for folks early in career, but to discourage people from pursuing a career they are interested because their personality does not fit the profile – may not be best approach to driver candidate selection.
- (9) A stakeholder suggested that it would be useful to survey recent graduates a year or so into employment to get their perspective on their training – were there areas that needed emphasis; was the training adequate; what measures could be taken to improve training?
- (10) Similarly, survey driver training school programs to obtain their insight.
- 5. **Establishing consistent qualifications for trainers**
- 6. **Establishing anti-harassment protocols for training programs**
 - (1) Having a harassment policy does not necessarily mean there is a protocol.
 - (2) Not only between co-workers, but also between driver and client.
 - (3) Soft skills program about healthy eating, finances, communication skills – 7-10-minute videos – done in around a few more months. “Expectation exchange” about setting boundaries before going on the road together. Same-gender training policy if that is what the trainer/carrier wants. (Women in Trucking)
 - (4) Federal mediation and conciliation agency – developed a training program on harassment, informational tool.
 - (5) Crisis line informed by RAINN – must be someone without conflict of interest. DOT has one for maritime academy. Third party resource.
- 7. **Utilizing compensation strategies that do not incentivize speeding or working long hours**

- (1) Recommendation in 2014 on driver compensation developed with Michael Belzer: eliminate exemption from fair labor standards act, establish a commission to figure out safe rate, paid by hour.
 - (a) Laws in place that do apply to drivers
 - (b) Should recognize that there is connection between safety compliance and pay, but compensation alone may not fix the problem. Enforcement is an important direct way to address speeding and working excessively long hours that violate regulations.
- (2) What is working from a best practice standpoint? Are there strategies or methods that encourage driver retention? Is this an issue that FMCSA or research groups should investigate?
- (3) Drivers should be provided with income expectations and work expectations. Salary is not unusual for private carriers. Drivers paid for only miles driven are forced to “eat” inefficiencies in the transportation system. They take the hit economically. Drivers recognize there is no value placed on their time.
- (4) Compensation affects stress levels.
- (5) There are a wide range of compensation strategies; hybridized approach of by the mile while the truck is moving and hourly rate for non-driving work. A stakeholder suggested that is systems where drivers are generally paid for all of work time, turnover rate is low.
 - (a) LTL carriers – paid by mile to hourly; turnover rate became very low.
 - (b) Some carriers use compensation packages that include benefits and consider that drivers work long weeks.
- (6) Results in more home time.
- (7) More paid vacation and more home time makes a difference with respect to driver retention.
- 8. Compensation packages with benefits and that take into account driver very long work weeks**
- 9. Transparency in hiring practices is needed to ensure candidates are aware of the demands of the job**
 - (1) Transparency in training
 - (2) New entrant drivers understand the demands of the job, pay structure, and specific job requirements. Address gap between expectations and reality.
- 10. Compensation for detention time**
 - (1) Would help drivers stay – either detention time goes down, or address frustrations because of it.
 - (2) For industry sectors such as tank haul, not paying for detention time would cause many to leave.
 - (3) A stakeholder suggested that drivers get paid for detention and they do not leave because of detention.

- (4) Stakeholders suggested that driver pay for detention time varies from sector to sector and can be difficult to collect.
 - (5) December 2014 study – a study was conducted on the effects of detention time on driver fatigue; a link to the study was provided.
 - (6) There was debate about the ELD mandate, specifically whether it motivates drivers to speed or is an important safety tool.
- 11. Coordination between DOL/DOT and Industry**
- (1) Some States have adopted graduated licenses
 - (2) Any way to incentivize safe, experienced drivers is good
 - (3) NIOSH has conducted research on driver health issues (e.g. exhaust exposure)
 - (4) Increased coordination between agencies could help more – quality training, qualified instructors, etc.
- 12. Route selection and trained dispatchers to ensure routes minimize unnecessary down and on the road time**
- (1) If shipper/receiver took long, it does not matter what driver does.
 - (2) Carriers want information from DOT on delays.
- 13. Income predictability**
- 14. Multilingual outreach**
- (1) A stakeholder suggested that driving school students be hired to become drivers, given certain number of hours (like in Australia and Canada)
 - (2) Open options to those outside the country to become commercial drivers.
 - (a) Training can be provided in native language.
 - (b) A stakeholder asked if testing can be conducted in different languages. FMCSA reported that the CDL knowledge test may be conducted in different languages, but the CDL skills test must be in English.
 - (c) A stakeholder suggested that revising policies to allow driver candidates from other countries to work in the U.S for lower pay conflicts with the discussion on driver retention. An incentive for driver to remain in the industry is to provide better pay.
 - (3) Working conditions for drivers must be improved before opening pool up.
 - (4) Allowing foreign workers to receive training and work in the trucking industry encourages diversity in the industry and provides opportunities for those who do not see a path for themselves in the industry.

Additional Comments

- MCSAC Driver Subcommittee will be able to provide driver perspective and fill out outline.
- A stakeholder indicated that there is a negative image of the industry
 - Law firms actively advertise suing truck drivers

- State laws create obstacles to entrepreneurship in the trucking industry. Oftentimes, senior drivers are interested in establishing a trucking company and restricting that opportunity deters drivers from remaining in the industry.
- Environmental factors contribute to highway safety.
- House highway bill set aside money dedicated to truck parking. Ensure legislation addresses the need for more truck parking. What stands out from FARS is where crashes take place. Rural stretches of highway are safest; non-toll roads less safe. Point out to lawmakers.

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