

Passage of SB 141 transferred responsibility for the state's system of fixed weigh stations to the Oklahoma Dept of Transportation effective 7/01/04. It was immediately obvious little attention had been paid to the system for a number of years. The Department inherited seriously dilapidated facilities, and outdated technology. The majority of these facilities were constructed during the mid 1960's. Because of changes in the highway system and commercial vehicle operations, most of these facilities no longer adequately serve their intended purpose.

The Department's first priority is to determine the program's objectives, which have tentatively been identified as:

- monitor and inspect commercial vehicle traffic to increase public safety
- monitor and enforce laws and regulations to reduce damage to existing highway infrastructure
- increase efficiency of the system to monitor a greater number of commercial vehicles and encourage compliance
- introduce computerization, and new technologies to monitor a greater number of commercial vehicles, and bring Oklahoma into Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration CVISN Level 1 compliance
- provide a homeland security presence
- monitor and regulate hazardous materials traffic in Oklahoma
- (possibly) assist with drug traffic interdiction

ODOT has begun preliminary investigations into what other states have done, and new technologies available. We've built strong partnerships with other agencies involved in regulation and enforcement of commercial vehicle operations (OCC, DPS, & OTC). And, using FMCSA funding, we've launched CVIEW (Commercial Vehicle Information Exchange Window) which, when complete, will electronically provide current regulatory, enforcement, and safety information to enforcement personnel.

Since assuming responsibility for the program, funding constraints have limited expenditures for the physical facilities to payment of utilities and minor repairs.

Before funds can be expended to best advantage, a master plan should be developed. A study to answer at least the following questions should be undertaken:

- What have other states done, and what would be considered 'best practices' with regard to weigh stations and enforcement?
- How do fixed weigh stations mesh with the overall enforcement effort?
- What is the most cost effective mix of modern technologies (weigh-in-motion, virtual enforcement, electronic screening, RFID's, etc)?
- What would an 'ideal' weigh station facility look like? And what would it cost?
- How many weigh station are required, and where should they be located?
- Do we need 'outbound' weigh stations, or could Oklahoma enter into reciprocal agreements with other states?

Concurrent with the study, repairs to the existing facilities should be undertaken. An October 2003 Department Study identified approximately \$3.5 million in needed repairs. Conditions at the weigh stations vary from substandard to outright safety hazards. Due to age, heavy use, and lack of maintenance, the scales themselves are in poor overall condition.

Fixed weigh stations are less effective if commercial vehicle operators feel they can route around them with impunity, or pass them when closed. Weigh stations are part of a wider monitoring and enforcement network, and to be effective should be complemented by mobile enforcement which is conducted by both OCC and DPS officers. Currently OCC officers do not have portable scales which would allow them to weigh commercial vehicles away from weigh station sites.

Four scales/officer are required to weigh a commercial vehicle away from fixed facilities. We estimate 20 officers need to be so equipped.

Currently Oklahoma has 7 fixed weigh stations with 12 scale platforms (2 locations are bi-directional). Of those scales, only 9 are currently operational. The scales at Hugo require repairs estimated at \$90,000. The scale at Woodward was damaged by lightning and has not been repaired because the scale is of inadequate length to weigh standard commercial vehicles, and the location has such short approaches it presents a traffic hazard.

Our preliminary research (pending completion of the study indicated above) indicates Oklahoma weigh station distribution might be allocated as follows:

Interstate & major corridors

existing, possible relocation	I-35 N @ Kansas border existing scales @ Tonkawa (one each side) are approx 15 miles south of the Kansas border
existing, probable relocation	I-35 S @ Texas border relocate from Davis (one each side)
existing	I-40 mid-state, west of El Reno (one each side) increase approach distances
new	I-40 E @ Arkansas border
new	I-40 W @ Texas border
new	I-44 NE @ Missouri border
new	I-44 SE @ Texas border
existing	US 69/US 75 near Colbert (one each side)
existing	US 271 near Hugo (one each side)

Non-Interstate

existing	US 287 @ Boise City (single scale)
new	US 271 @ Texas line
new	US 54 in Texas County
new	US 385 in Cimarron County

existing, probable relocation	US 412 - US 270 Jct relocate in vicinity of Woodward (TBD)
new	US 412 E @ Arkansas border
new	US 75 N @ Kansas border

Right-of-way is the most expensive component of weigh station construction. To minimize ROW required for proposed new weigh stations, and to avoid safety problems at existing weigh stations, our studies have indicated the need for weigh-in-motion devices. WIM's would also expedite processing of commercial vehicles allowing OCC personnel to process a greater number of vehicles, plus increasing operating efficiency for motor carriers by saving driver's time. WIM's would pre-screen commercial vehicles allowing those that are obviously within weight limits to bypass the scale, unless randomly selected for registration, permitting, or safety check. Ramps at most existing weigh stations are inadequate for the number of vehicles processed. During peak traffic times, trucks are often waved through to avoid having trucks blocking traffic lanes.

While a weigh station program would require a substantial sum of money, it's important to remember the amount of money required pales in comparison to the cost of damages to the infrastructure by unregulated, overweight commercial vehicles.

An adjunct to the weigh station system is the necessity to develop an Automated Routing System for oversize/overweight vehicles. Parts of the current permitting system are manual, which is time consuming both for the state employees who are performing the work, but more importantly for our 'clients.' Commercial vehicle operators are pushing for automation, pointing out that lost time plodding through the current system costs them a lot of money. Additionally, the system is so cumbersome that there is considerable motivation to simply skip the permitting process and take one's chances with enforcement.

Oklahoma's weigh stations are basically operated based on a 40 hour week. Whereas, the trucking industry operates 24/7. The Corporation Commission varies 'open' hours to monitor a wider spectrum of commercial vehicle traffic, but lack of personnel precludes 24/7 operations. It would be desirable to have a 24/7 presence at least at some of the facilities, and some 24/7 mobile enforcement. The exact details would be determined by the study previously mentioned.