

McLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

Resolution on Proposed Changes to the Level and Structure of Fees for Overweight Trucks in the Commonwealth of Virginia

February 4, 2009

WHEREAS, in 2008 the Virginia General Assembly directed the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to review the current fee structure for permits granted to overweight vehicles operating on Virginia's highways, in order to determine what, if any, additional fees should be associated with highway damage and added maintenance costs caused by such vehicles; and,

WHEREAS, the review was carried out by VDOT's research partner, the Virginia Transportation Research Council (VTRC), in consultation with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and representatives of the industries that own and/or operate overload and overweight vehicles; and,

WHEREAS, the results of the VTRC study show clearly that the monetary damages and additional maintenance costs caused by overweight vehicles are significantly higher than the fees paid by those vehicles; and,

WHEREAS, a large number of haulers are allowed to receive permits for overweight loads without any fee payment whatsoever (including haulers for concrete, containerized cargo, excavated material, cotton module, specialized well-drilling equipment, solid waste, Virginia-grown farm products in Accomack and Northampton counties, and sand, gravel, and crushed stone in the seven southwest Virginia coal severance counties); and,

WHEREAS, VDOT has drafted legislation recommending changes to existing overload and overweight fees that are not based on the full costs of damage and added maintenance costs, due to concerns about the business impacts of charging fees that fully reflect such damage costs, and that rely on lump-sum (flat) charges rather than a combination of lump-sum charges and charges per vehicle-mile traveled; and,

WHEREAS, any costs not borne by those responsible for highway damage must be borne substantially by the taxpayers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the McLean Citizens Association (MCA) strongly supports appropriate user charges for overweight trucks and therefore recommends a fee structure and level for overweight trucks that more closely reflect the estimated pavement- and bridge-damage costs attributed to them, in order to:

- allow the Commonwealth to generate sufficient revenue to recover more fully the costs that the Commonwealth incurs to mitigate the damage and added maintenance costs caused by overweight trucks; and,

- send better price signals to the trucking industry and consumers of the products that are being transported, in order to reduce the amount of damage and added maintenance costs caused by the overweight trucks, as the price signals take effect over time;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MCA recommends an additional full review of the results of the VTRC study and VDOT's recommendations, expanding the group of "stakeholders" to include the general taxpayer as well as individuals, groups and organizations with a direct commercial interest in the results of the study;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the MCA recommends that the additional full review should include although not be limited to:

- the justification for issuing free permits to a large number of categories of haulers of overweight loads; and,
- the need for mileage-related charges as well as lump-sum fees, given the high correlation between vehicle-miles traveled by overweight vehicles and the pavement damages they cause.