



Truck Driver Shortage *Winter 2017*



ATA Position: The American Trucking Associations (ATA) supports the implementation of a pilot program to allow drivers between the ages of 18 to 21 to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) in interstate commerce.

Background: Motor carriers continue to struggle to find qualified, professional drivers. In an ATA study, 90% of for-hire truckload carriers reported difficulty in recruiting drivers capable of meeting the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) driver qualification requirements. ATA estimates the 2015 shortage of drivers was 48,000. ATA estimates that the current trends could see the shortage balloon to a shortage exceeding 175,000 drivers by 2024.

Two factors stand out as primary contributors to shortage: the high average age of drivers; and the fact that a CMV driver must be at least 21 years old to drive a truck across state lines. The median age of over-the-road truck driver is 49, compared with just 42 for all U.S. workers. Private fleet drivers have a median age of 52 years old. Unfortunately, recruiting younger drivers is challenging. Often candidates have already settled on a career when they reach the minimum age to drive a truck across state lines. Additionally, insurance companies frequently require a driver have at least two years of experience as a prerequisite for coverage.

Impact: The driver shortage has significant impact on the trucking industry. Without a steady pool of new drivers, motor carriers' growth is restricted. The cost of employing a driver can increase as well, which impacts freight pricing. In the long term, an enduring driver shortage may impede industry wide freight volumes and result in modal switch as shippers look for reliable ways bring their goods to market.

Status: The FAST Act – the most recent comprehensive highway bill - included a provision that encouraged the DOT to conduct a pilot program to study the safety of allowing younger drivers to operate in interstate commerce. However, this provision restricted participation in the pilot to military personnel under the age of 21 whose military occupation classification is driving a truck. ATA has advocated that this pilot be expanded to allow civilian drivers under the age of 21 to participate, which ATA believes will provide a significantly improved understanding of the benefits of allowing drivers between the ages of 18 to 21 to drive in interstate commerce.

Solution: ATA will continue to advocate that the DOT pilot be structured to include military and civilian drivers. Additionally, ATA will continue to seek a federal law establishing new graduated CDL standards that would allow commercial motor vehicle drivers ages 18-20 to engage in both intrastate and interstate commerce in a safe, controlled manner.

In addition, ATA has identified these further steps to help alleviate the driver shortage: 1) additional federal funds for driver training programs and the removal of barriers to access to federal financial aid for students to attend truck driving schools, 2) legislation to direct the Department of Labor to establish truck driving as a national in-demand occupation which would free up resources devoted to filling vacant truck driving jobs; and 3) legislation that would require the DOT conduct a comprehensive study of efforts to streamline the licensing requirements between the DOT and the Department of Defense.

For more information, please contact: ATA Legislative Affairs at 202-544-6245.