

The Economy, Environment and Safety

According to the State Department of Transportation, “Truck transportation should exist in harmony with local economic development, environmental sustainability, and public safety and truck route choice should consider these factors.”

Considering these “truck route choice” factors one at a time:

Local economic development

The Department finds that the absence of large truck traffic would benefit businesses along the restricted routes by minimizing negative impacts like noise, emissions, congestion and safety concerns to make the locations more desirable for outdoor activities, tourism, dining, shopping and lodging. This is as sophisticated as the Department’s economic analysis gets. At no point does the Department show or even suggest that businesses or the tourism industry are currently being negatively impacted by the presence of large trucks.

The Department does not address the negative economic impact this regulation would have on every other community in the region that depends on truck transportation for the delivery of its goods. The best it does is estimate that the economic implications of the regulation would be minimal – at \$4.2 million to the trucking industry – and that the quality of life benefits outweigh such a minor economic impact.

It completely ignores the increased costs that will be passed along to the consumers of all goods both locally and regionally.

Environmental sustainability

Prohibiting trucks from taking the most direct route to their destination adds extra miles to each trip, resulting in more fuel consumption and additional unnecessary release of CO₂ into the environment. By their own extremely conservative calculations, the Department projects an annual increase in fuel consumption of 323,000 gallons of fuel and 3,500 tons of CO₂ emissions, a greenhouse gas. Should these regulations be implemented statewide, the additional miles would consume more than 192 million gallons of fuel and release more than 2.13 million tons of CO₂ each year.

Public Safety

Federal Law allows the State Department of Transportation to restrict large truck access to state highways for safety and engineering purposes only.

The Department regulation claims their restriction is based on safety and engineering analysis, but provides vague details. Alternatively, it provided accident rates for specific routes of travel between predetermined locations (i.e.: traveling Road A until Road B, turning north on Road C), rather than actual truck accident data for the specific highways targeted in this regulation. In fact, some of the specific routes of travel they cited have had fewer than 5 truck accidents in the past three years.

Additionally, Routes 79, 96, and portions of 41 and 41A, which are included in the restriction, were previously analyzed for safety and engineering reasons, and then designated by the Department as safe “Designated Access Routes” for trucks with trailers up to 53 feet.