



EVERETT TRANSTRENDS

THE TRANSLAW GROUP, INC.

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 CSA 2010 KNOWLEDGE BUILDER
- 2 COPS ON THE TAKE
- 4 OBAMA ADMINISTRATION FAVORS TOLLS
- 5 RI MONEY MAKER
- 5 CATHETERIZE THEY SELF
- 6 MOVING SCAM

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CSA 2010 KNOWLEDGE BUILDER!

CSA 2010 Data Preview

Commercial motor vehicle carriers may now view their individual safety assessments on the [Data Preview Website](#). This updated Website provides motor carriers with information on where they stand in each Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Category (BASIC) based on roadside data and investigation findings. Each motor carrier's BASIC assessments are visible only to them (and to enforcement staff) until December of 2010. In December, assessments will be made available to the public. Also, enforcement agencies will use these assessments to prioritize the Agency's enforcement and compliance assistance workload. By providing carriers with this information now, FMCSA's approach gives carriers the earliest possible opportunity to improve compliance.

FMCSA is providing motor carriers with this early look at the new Safety Measurement System (SMS) so they can see their performance data, can address safety compliance issues right away and can update and verify their data online. Release of this safety performance information underscores FMCSA's commitment to data integrity and the motor carrier industry's responsibility for ensuring commercial vehicle safety. This important step is designed to allow motor carriers to identify and address unsafe behaviors that can lead to crashes. What can motor carriers do now to prepare for the new system? Motor carriers should look at their assessment on the Data Preview Website, identify any data mistakes, verify and update their motor carrier census data, in particular power units (PU) and vehicle miles travelled (VMT) on the MCS-150 form, and take the necessary steps to correct unsafe driver and/or company safety practices.

PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE TOLLS TO INCREASE

For the third time since January 2009, toll rates on the Pennsylvania Turnpike are going up to meet the demands of a state law that allows the money to be diverted to mass transit and other projects.

Truckers with E-ZPass will pay 3 percent more while cash customers will see their rates jump 10 percent.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission voted for the increases earlier this week, which take effect Jan. 2, 2011.

The current toll for a truck weighing 60,000 to 80,000 pounds traveling the full 357 miles from Ohio to New Jersey is \$137.80 with E-ZPass or \$153.25 cash. With the new rate applied, a full-length trip becomes \$141.93 with E-ZPass or \$168.57 in cash.



About 1.2 million vehicles use E-ZPass on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Officials say the 2011 toll schedule is an incentive for more drivers to use electronic system, which is available in 14 Northeast states.

“We believe it’s essential to encourage more consumers to get E-ZPass,” Pennsylvania Turnpike CEO Joe Brimmeier said in a

statement. “Besides the enhanced convenience for motorists, it’s four times more efficient, processing up to 1,200 vehicles per hour compared to 300 per hour in a cash lane.”

The estimated \$35 million increase for the turnpike will help pay for capital improvements and fulfill the commission’s obligations to the state.

CHICAGO COP LATEST CHARGED IN TOW BRIBERY SCHEME

A veteran Chicago policeman has become the latest of eight individuals and five police officers charged in a scheme to accept bribes for tow jobs in the Windy City. James Wodnicki, a 20-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, was arrested and charged in late June for felony interference with commerce by threat or violence.

Court documents show that Wodnicki used his position as a traffic enforcement officer and accident responder to give tow operators preferential treatment in exchange for cash.



Five current or former police officers have been charged after the FBI learned certain tow truck companies and drivers operating in Chicago were bribing police officers "in return for receiving the opportunity to tow vehicles from accident scenes and collect resulting tow fees," court documents state.

Bribes from \$50 to \$400 were paid per vehicle towed, and auto repair

services were also given to police officers by towing operators involved in the scheme. Investigators learned about the scheme after one tow business discovered he had lost business at accident scenes because he wouldn't participate in the tow-for-money scheme.

"Operation Tow Scam" was investigated for five years by the FBI, the IRS and the Chicago Police Department Internal Affairs Division. Wodnicki, whose beat included patrolling the Shakespeare District, was charged in late June. His attorney represented him in a preliminary appearance on June 29.

In one transcribed recording of a conversation in 2006, a tow driver described to an FBI informant how to slip a bribe to police while shaking hands.

Tow Driver A: *"(Tow Driver C) says the only thing he wants is to help him out bro'. You know what I'm saying? Remember pa ...palm of your hand (put the bribe money in the palm of your hand) Joe."*

Informant: *"I know, I know. I'm, I'm gonna try to get better, bro'. So nobody sees, you know what I'm saying?"*

Tow Driver A: *"Right."*

Informant: *"Let me fold it up in here. A hundred and fifty, right?"*

Tow Driver A: *"Yes sireee Bobbo."*

Informant: *"Don't worry, I'll get better at this, kid. I'm not used to this (expletive)."*

Tow Driver A: *(Singing) ... "and they saw you puppy love ..."*

Tow Driver A showed the informant his cell phone, which included cell phones and beat information for multiple officers in Chicago's 14th District.

ADMINISTRATION FAVORS TOLLING OVER FUEL TAX INCREASE

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood says the Obama administration favors tolling and public-private partnerships over increasing the fuel tax to pay for transportation and infrastructure.

LaHood told the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that funding a long-term surface transportation bill, such as the one unveiled a year ago by T&I Committee Chairman James Oberstar, D-MN, requires thinking “outside the box” in order to fund the estimated \$450 billion to \$500 billion price tag.



Committee members quizzed LaHood on Tuesday, July 27, about where the administration stands on how to fund the bill.

“The administration is opposed to raising the gas tax when we have unemployment hovering around 10 percent and people are out of work,” LaHood said.

“There is a gas tax in existence. We should use those resources and couple those with other

opportunities. We’ve suggested an infrastructure fund; we’ve suggested public-private partnerships; we’ve suggested tolling. I’ve been to places around the country where they’ve put HOT lanes (high-occupancy toll lanes) in and funded them with tolls. You can raise a lot of money with tolling, and people see the value of those.”

LaHood indicated that the administration is close to releasing guidance language to Congress concerning the next long-term surface transportation authorization bill. The bill would replace SAFETEA-LU, which has been funding federal transportation programs since August 2005 and continues to limp along via short-term extensions.

LaHood said the administration likes Chairman Oberstar’s bill, but funding remains the biggest hurdle for lawmakers and the White House to finalize it. The Obama administration has proposed a national infrastructure bank to pay for large-scale projects, but appropriators have not given it any funding so far. That leaves tolling and public-private partnerships, LaHood said.

“When I’ve been around the country, I’ve seen the value of tolling in building infrastructure,” he said. “Whether it’s a road, or a bridge, or a highway, you can raise significant dollars and people have the discretion whether to use it or not.”

PAWTUCKET BRIDGE NETS \$6.9 MILLION IN FINES FROM TRUCKS

Police are still stopping 417 trucks per month that are in violation of the state of Rhode Island's weight restriction on an Interstate 95 bridge over the Pawtucket River.

According to recent reports from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, more than 20,500 trucks have been stopped since November 2007, resulting in \$6.9 million in fines.

The question continues to be: Why do truckers keep crossing the Pawtucket River Bridge?

Some truckers have indicated that the restriction is not clearly marked, but others swear that the



restriction is clear and they navigate the detours just fine. A Rhode Island DOT spokesman assured us last year that the posting is clear.

Still, law enforcement officers stop 417 trucks per month. That average is actually down from the 1,023 trucks per month that law enforcement stopped during the first six months of the 2008 restriction. An officer was recently quoted in the *Providence Journal* saying truckers tell him that their cell phones or navigational devices do not show the detours. Other truckers press their luck or have other excuses, the officer said. He told the paper he has stopped the same trucks more than once.

RIDOT set a weight limit on the bridge of 22 tons in November 2007, but strengthened the restriction to 18 tons in 2008. Most fines amount to \$85 for the truck driver and \$3,000 for the motor carrier for weight and axle violations. Translaw thinks that the state has a great money-maker and probably won't do anything to change the status quo.

TRUCKER FORCED TO LEAVE DOCK FOR QUESTIONING COMPANY'S BATHROOM POLICY

A driver's request to use the bathroom at a food packaging plant recently led to one trucker being asked to drop his trailer at the dock – and leave the premises.



Erwin Page of Owen, WI, arrived around 4 a.m. on Thursday, Sept. 16, at the Ring Container Technologies food packaging facility in St. Joseph, MO. He backed into the dock and went to bed for a few hours. Around 8:30 a.m., he said he went inside the facility and asked an office employee if he could use the bathroom. Things took a turn for the worse at this point. "I was told that drivers weren't allowed inside to use the facilities, but I explained that there weren't any Port-a-Potties or anything outside for drivers to use either," he said. "I was told to just go back outside and pee behind my trailer by the dock, like everybody else does."

This apparently is an attractive alternative for Ring Container. Eventually, Page said he was allowed to use the restroom in the office after he asked to speak to the higher-ups about the company's policy. However, not long after the incident, and after he contacted his dispatcher about what happened, Page received a phone call from his dispatcher that the facility had called and said he was "no longer welcome" at Ring's facility. Another driver had to pick up Page's trailer and deliver it to him at a nearby truck stop.

MOVING VAN LINES INC. FINED FOR HOLDING PROPERTY HOSTAGE

The Feds have fined an interstate moving company \$281,000 for violating several federal regulations – including "holding consumers' property hostage" and jacking up moving fees beyond contractually agreed amounts.



FMCSA announced Monday that it has fined Moving Van Lines Inc. after an extensive investigation driven by consumer complaints. The investigation into the Tampa Bay, FL-based company led to charges of 28 counts of "failing to relinquish possession of a household goods shipment (hostage load), and one count of collecting fees more than the original binding estimate."

And, you thought your day was lousy!

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