

Newsletter of the Maine Professional Drivers Association



Volume XIV, No. 2

“Committed to Safety, Courtesy, and Professionalism”

February 2004

MPDA OPPOSES 3RD LANE RESTRICTION



Turnpike Relations Committee Report

The MPDA general meeting held in South Portland, January 18, featured a rather heated discussion of the Turnpike's ban on commercial vehicles from the left lane of three lane portions which is to take effect May 5. MPDA opposed the ban before it was voted on and still does based on safety concerns. During the discussion of the third lane restriction, other issues with the Turnpike also surfaced.

President **Ron Hutchins** appointed a Turnpike Relations Committee consisting of **Denis Litalien** (Chrm.), **Warren Lewis**, **Alan Paradis**, and **Roger Sproul**. They were instructed to attempt to meet with the MTA to discuss the issue and to make recommendations to the Officers concerning any further actions to be taken.

The Committee met both of the following Saturdays (Jan. 24 and 31). They decided to draft a letter to the editor to be sent to all major newspapers in Maine over President Hutchins' signature. That letter has been circulated among the Officers and approved. The Committee has also recommended posters be placed in truck stops informing drivers of

MPDA's opposition to the ban. Warren Lewis has prepared a draft poster to be approved by the Officers before posting.

Executive Director Dick Brown will set up a meeting for himself and Roger Sproul with MTA. The general purpose of the meeting will be to discuss our grievances with MTA. Most importantly, we want to ask them to reconsider the ban on trucks in the left lane. If they are not willing to repeal it, would they at least amend it to allow use in emergency situations? Secondly, we will want to express our displeasure at how they arrived at their decision to impose the ban, sneaking it into an obscure STIP document no one reads vs. presenting it to public comment BEFORE making the decision. The "*Sensible Transportation Policy Act*" requires public participation. Compelled by this law, MTA did hold a public hearing July 8 and allowed written comments for 10 days following. We submitted several letters in opposition. They then voted for the ban November 19, saying they had to impose it regardless of the comments received because it was already in the STIP (i.e. decision had been made long prior to public participation required by law!).

THE ISSUES

- MTA has voted to impose a ban on trucks using the far left lane beginning in May.
- ⇒ MPDA opposed that decision through written comments prior to the vote and still opposes it.
- MTA claims its decision was based on environmental (clean air) concerns.
- ⇒ MPDA believes the air pollution study (computer model) was flawed by faulty assumptions.
- MPDA bases its opposition to the ban on safety issues which it believes supercede air quality.
- ⇒ MTA has not disputed our claims on the safety issues, but has simply ignored them.
- MTA claims that it has no choice but to impose the ban due to the STIP commitment.
- ⇒ MPDA disputes that claim based on discussion with state employees.
- MTA supports its ban with the statement “*12 of 14 eastern states have similar bans*”.
- ⇒ MPDA drivers have driven in those other 12 states and have seen the resulting safety hazards.
- MTA suggests that they had to impose the ban to come up with enough air quality credits.
- ⇒ MPDA believes other alternatives could have generated just as many, if not more, credits.


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President's Message

I would like to start by thanking Dale Hanington for taking the time to do a new Hours of Service Seminar for MPDA. I'm a little disappointed with the number of members that were there. I think more of our members would have benefited from the knowledge had they taken the time to attend. I would also like to thank all the members who did take the time to e-mail me their opinion on the turnpike issue.

At the last General Meeting held in South. Portland at the Old Country Buffet Rest, on January 18, 2004, we put together two committees. One to work on the turnpike third-lane restriction. The committee members are **Denis Litalien**, Chairman, **Warren Lewis**, **Alan Paradis**, and **Roger Sproul**. I want to thank all the committee members for their hard work on this project. They also will be having a meeting with the Turnpike Authority sometime in February. Thank you gentlemen.

The second committee that was formed was the Membership Committee. The members are **Dick Brown**, **Peter Mortensen**, and **Andy Holmes**, Chairman. This committee was given the job of increasing our membership and finding new benefits for our members. Thank you gentlemen for all your hard work on this project.

Keep watching future MPDA Newsletters for the results of these 2 committees hard work.

We also voted to send out our newsletter once a month. This will give our members more up-to-date information. We will also be having a "Letters-to-the-Editor" section. This will give our members the opportunity to express their feelings on any particular subject. This is your Association, use it.

If you want or need to talk to me at anytime, my home phone is 622-1118 and my cell-phone is 458-0151. Both numbers have voice mail, or you can e-mail me at hutchtruc@aol.com or ronh@mmta.com and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Thank You and Remember...

"The World Is Run By Those Who Get Involved"

Regards, Ron Hutchins, President MPDA

Membership Officer's Report

We are off to another great year with MPDA. Our dues payments are coming in very well. The Maine Professional Drivers Association is powered by its membership. The more members enrolled the more power (visibility) we have in the transportation industry. Our goal this year is to double our membership. Just think, if every current member got one new member, this goal would be easily attainable. Keep us in mind when you are talking to friends and co-workers. Your new member WILL make a difference in our organization.

If anyone knows of a former member who would like to rejoin MPDA, PLEASE let one of the officers know as soon as possible.

If you have any address changes please make sure you fill out and send in the 'update application' that was included in a previous issue of Behind the Wheel. You can send this application to me at:

MPDA Membership
c/o Peter Mortensen
30 Cathedral Oaks Drive
Biddeford, ME 04005

Pete Mortensen, MPDA Membership Officer

MPDA ROADTEAM Report

Well it looks like we are off to a good start for 2004. I hope everyone is enduring the sub zero temperatures we have been having without too many difficulties. The good news is the days are getting longer now and the temperature should start climbing. Of course the frost will be coming out of the roads soon and it looks like we will have a bumper crop of frost heaves this year. Oh well it is just one of the signs and natural occurrences of the changing seasons in Maine. I did hear that it is supposed to be warm and sunny on the Fourth of July. Okay, enough about the weather already. Lets get to the ROADTEAM report.

We had a great training seminar on the new hours of service rules at the end of January. Our thanks to Dale Hanington who was our presenter and did a fantastic job of explaining how these new rules will work and answered many questions we had. It will be interesting to see how well these new rules work or don't work in addressing the issue of driver fatigue.

I was somewhat disappointed at the turnout for this training though. I don't want to be critical of anyone and I know we all have busy schedules and lots of thing going on. I do however want all of our members to know that your ROADTEAM schedules these training seminars for your benefit at no cost to you. We do this because you, the members, asked for it and we want to keep you up to date on the latest safety issues and to help you stay sharp with your driving skills and knowledge of federal and state regulations. It does take extra time on the part of those who do the presentation to prepare for these training sessions.

We will be evaluating our training program at our ROADTEAM meeting in February to see where to go with it. It doesn't make sense to have people prepare and take their time to do these if only 3 or 4 people show up. If any of you have any suggestions please feel free to e-mail them to me at tftomp5349@aol.com. As I said at the beginning please, please don't take offense to my comments, I am just trying to be realistic about the importance of this program based on the attendance at these training sessions.

A change we will see in May of this year will be the restriction of large trucks from the left lane of the three lane sections of the Maine Turnpike and the section of I-95 below the York toll barrier. Be prepared, as it is going to happen. Don't let it catch you by surprise.

Mike Conroy tells me things have been a little slow in his area with the driver-ed classes and the same holds true in my area. The schedule for driver-ed classes will be picking up in the next few months though.

I was invited to go with **Andy Reed** to the safety meeting of Sure Winner Foods and talk to their drivers about safety and courtesy. He also had a chance to tell them about the MPDA and what we do. It was a good meeting and thanks Andy for the opportunity.

ROADTEAM members don't forget about the ROADTEAM meeting on February 28, 2004 at the MMTA office in Augusta. We will be going over our calendar for 2004 and voting on a new ROADTEAM member.

You have most likely also noticed the cost of diesel fuel inching up once again something, which is no big surprise.

That's it for this issue of BTW. Keep the shiny side up and the greasy side down and I'll see you on the boulevard.

Fred Thompson, MPDA ROADTEAM Captain

(Continued on page 3)

Secretary's Report

Monthly Newsletters!

MPDA's *Behind the Wheel* newsletter will now be a monthly mailing. If you have an idea or an article that you would like to see in an upcoming edition, would like to sponsor an issue or run a small ad, you may forward it on via email to <behindthewheel@mainepda.org> or contact Dave Stuart @ 727-3704.

How about a letter to the editor or an article with information of importance to the trucking industry? This is your newsletter. We encourage and welcome input from all members. Below, you will find the deadlines for submissions for the year. Please be sure you send them in by these deadlines. Anything not received by these deadlines will be held for the next issue.

Newsletter submission deadlines for the 2004 year.

March 6 th	April 3 rd
May 1 st	June 12 th (TDC Issue)
July 3 rd	August 1 st
September 4 th	October 2 nd
November 6 th	December 11 th (Banquet Issue)

And as always, if you don't have email capabilities, you are encouraged to call the MPDA phone at 207-318-7395 or send them to our mailing address at;

Maine Professional Drivers Association
PO Box 5672
Augusta, Maine
04332-5672

Highlights from the General meeting held on January 18th at the Old Country Buffet in South Portland.

- * Newly elected officers for 2004-2005 term were sworn in.
- * The ROADTEAM safety presentation was on Winter Driving.
- * Newly elected President, Ron Hutchins appointed Dick Brown as Executive Director. Dick will be working to increase membership and meet with supporting companies to express appreciation for all they do. He will also be contacting the membership to see what they want from MPDA.

- * Ron, Dave and Dick are working on promotional videos, public service announcements and training videos. Anyone interested in lending a hand may contact Dave at dstuart@mainepda.org or call at 207-727-3704.

- * Treasurers Report: The fiscal financial statement looks well. 2003 closed out on a good note.

- * The Maine State TDC will be held in Bangor at Dysart's on May 15th.

- * Two new membership applications were accepted: Bruce Gray Jr. of B & J Transport and Roger Wilcox of Hutchins Trucking.

- * Turnpike Relations Committee, appointed by Ron Hutchins: Denis Litalien (Chair), Warren Lewis, Alan Paradis, and Roger Sproul.

- * Membership Committee, appointed by Ron Hutchins: Dick Brown, Andy Holmes (Chair) and Peter Mortensen.

- * For the past year, there has been a safety presentation by the ROADTEAM at each general meeting. This has been a successful endeavor and will continue. Anyone with a suggestion for a

future presentation may contact Ron Hutchins.

* General meetings will include a raffle for a special gift. Raffle winner of a gift certificate to the Ninety Nine Restaurant was Everett Macmaster.

Terry Stuart, MPDA Secretary



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2004 ENERGY EQUIPMENT AND EQUIPMENT EXPO
AT THE AUGUSTA CIVIC CENTER ON APRIL 7 AND 8.**

**THERE WILL BE SEVERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
AND 60 DISPLAYS.**

**MAINE OIL DEALERS INVITES ALL MPDA MEMBERS
TO ATTEND THIS EVENT.**

**IT IS FREE TO VISIT THE DISPLAYS AND SEE THE
MUSCLE CARS.**

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE

Maine Professional Drivers Association's

***Behind the Wheel* Newsletter & Board of Directors**

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Fred Thompson

ROADTEAM Captain
Webmasters

Dave Stuart & Pete Mortensen

MPDA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting courtesy, safety and professionalism in the field of commercial driving. Articles of interest to members, advertising copy, inquiries, payments, change of address, comments, and newsletter submissions should be mailed to:

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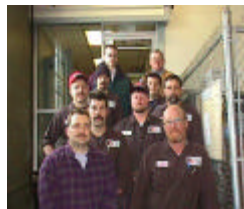
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MPDA CALENDAR OF EVENTS – 2004

(As of February 14, 2004) - (Includes events that our members are involved in, or are of interest to our members)

February

- 20 **MPDA Officers Meeting** – Yarmouth Lumber, Gray – 6:00pm - Contact Ron Hutchins at 623-4128 or <ronh@mmta.com>
- 24 **So. Convoy Committee Meeting** – Old Country Buffet Rest., Maine Mall-6:00pm - contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net> or 727-5349
- 28 **MPDA ROADTEAM Meeting** - MMTA Office, Augusta - 9:00am - contact Fred Thompson at 582-1343 or <tfthomp5349@aol.com>

March

- 20 **MPDA General Meeting** – MMTA Office, Augusta – 9:00am – Contact Ron Hutchins at 623-4128 or <ronh@mmta.com>
- 28 **MPDA Membership Training** – 7:30am – MMTA Office, Augusta - contact Fred Thompson at 582-1343 or <Tfthomp5349@aol.com>

April

- 7-8 **2004 Energy Equipment and Equipment Expo** - Augusta Civic Center - hosted by the Maine Oil Dealers Association - Contact Lynn LeClair at 729-5298 or <lynn@meoil.com>
- 17 **MPDA General Meeting** - Time & Location TBA – Contact Ron Hutchins at 623-4128 or <ronh@mmta.com>
- 24 **MPDA Membership Training** – 7:30am – MMTA Office, Augusta - contact Fred Thompson at 582-1343 or <Tfthomp5349@aol.com>
- 25 **Great Grocery Grudge VIII** – Hannaford/Shaw's/Hutchins Driving Competition – Hannaford Office, Scarborough – 8:00AM – Contact Denis Litalien at <dentruck@hotmail.com> or 468-7373
- 29-30 **N. American Truck Show** Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD - FMI contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net> or 727-5349

May

- 1 **N. American Truck Show** Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD - FMI contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net> or 727-5349
- 2 Tentative **7th Annual Northeast Professional Truck Drivers Charity Challenge** – Location TBA - contact Fred Schenk at 508-453-3632 or <StJudeRoadeo4kids@excite.com>
- 5 Third Lane Restriction Takes Effect – Maine Turnpike & Maine I-95
- 14 **TDC Set-up Day** – Dysart's Truck Terminal, Hermon – Noon - contact Cliff Gray at <grayc@mmta.com> or 623-4128
- 14 **MPDA Hospitality Get-together** (for everyone involved in competition)– Room 230, Bangor Motor Inn – Contact Everett MacMaster at 797-6330 or <emac@maine.rr.com>
- 16 **Maine State Truck Driving Championships**– Dysart's/Bangor Motor Inn – 5:30am - contact Cliff Gray at <grayc@mmta.com> or 623-4128

June

- 6 (Northern) **Convoy for Kids** – Bangor/Brewer - contact Stan McLaughlin at <swifttrucker@aol.com> or 827-7209

August

- 17-24 **ATA National Truck Driving Championships** – Salt Lake City, Utah - contact Cliff Gray at <grayc@mmta.com> or 623-4128

October

- 9 **Trucking 4 Kids Convoy Set-up Day** – 9:00am – Portland - contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net> or 727-5349 or <trucking4kids@aol.com>
- 10 **Maine Trucking for Kids Convoy**, 7:00am - Portland/South Portland - contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net> or 727-5349 or <trucking4kids@aol.com>
- 24 **10th Annual N. H. Truckers Drive for Kids** – Steeplegate Mall, Concord, NH - Hopkinton Fairgrounds, Hopkinton, NH – 7:30am - Contact Linda Rafeal at 603-435-6366 or <LndaRfl@nhpda.com>

(Corrections or additions should be sent to Pete Mortensen at morty@maine.rr.com or 284-4933)

Maine Turnpike Committee's "Letter To The Newspapers"

On November 19th, the Maine Turnpike Authority voted to restrict the new 3rd lane of the Maine Turnpike from use by heavy-duty trucks. The Maine Department of Transportation also adopted this rule for the section of I-95 between the Maine Turnpike and the New Hampshire State Line. The rule is scheduled to take effect May 5th 2004.

The Maine Professional Drivers Association (MPDA) opposes this restriction for many reasons, especially though, for safety reasons.

The MPDA is made up of professional truck drivers who join with the specific goal of promoting safety and professionalism on our highways. Members consist of a wide cross-section of the trucking industry, including union and non-union drivers, drivers from large and small companies, owner-operators and truck owners.

These Maine truck drivers, until now, have always been proud to say Maine had enough common sense not to have lane restrictions that bunch up traffic behind trucks unable to get by slow moving vehicles as in some other states. Our State has always been considered a leader in our industry for helping to maintain that open lane as a safety cushion for all its drivers. If any vehicle needs to make an evasive maneuver, pass a slow moving vehicle, move over to make room for breakdowns or traffic entering the highway, that option has always been there.

The Maine Professional Drivers Assn. and its members have promoted and endorsed the Widening of the Turnpike as a way to spread traffic out to allow for more following distance, side-of-vehicle safety cushions and traffic that moves safely and efficiently. Restricting use of the third lane will encourage drivers to tailgate, pass on the right and create many dangerous situations especially at on and off-ramps that could be alleviated with a simple pass on the left. The situation is further aggravated by the recent removal of the rule mandating vehicles to return to the right after passing. Now many drivers simply "park" themselves in the middle lane without regard to what is going on around them, hampering our ability to get by or maintain the speed limit.

We also believe that the environmental reasons for the restriction are ludicrous. The Turnpike Authority promotes a study showing vehicles will travel 3 mph faster in the left lane, therefore causing more pollution. We would point out that if trucks comprise about 10% of the traffic on the Turnpike, the amount of time they actually go in the third lane before returning to the second (or first) lane is actually such a small percentage that we cannot calculate that minuscule amount in relation to other vehicles in determining any increase in pollution. Also, many trucks are restricted mechanically or electronically from speeding so the difference in speed becomes a moot point, as they will travel the same speed whether they are in the first, second or third lanes.

It seems that restricting one of our "escape valves" to maintain a safety cushion around our trucks and not allowing us to travel safely and efficiently just doesn't make sense.

And now, just last week the Turnpike Authority announced it wants us to pay higher tolls to use fewer lanes!!!!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hours of Service - LIKE OR DISLIKE ?

How do you feel about the new hours of service rules? I and the association would like to know where you stand. If we get a chance to speak on this subject, we would like to know how the majority of our membership feels.

My Opinion

I am very upset with the new rules. I am angered that the government's decision on how to alleviate a "supposedly" tired trucker problem, is to increase my driving time 1 hour a day.

- * Increase my possible eight day times from 70 to 98 hours (with 42 hours still available)*
- * making a 14 hour inclusive rule,*

That doesn't allow necessary break times and breakdown time - or allow a driver to wait out weather or traffic conditions.

** Forcing a driver in a sleeper to take 10 hours off. No consideration of where that driver may be, such as a rest stop with no facilities, not to mention the fact that in most sleeper operations, a person never sleeps more than 6.5 to 7 hours. The rest of the time you just sit in a small area (2X2) with no standing room, getting tired before you start.*

Call me during the day with your name and opinion. You may leave a message if no one is available.

Warren Lewis - 284-8973

MPDA OFFICER'S MEETING

The next MPDA Officer's meeting will be Feb 20th, 6:00PM at Yarmouth Lumber in Gray, Maine.
For more information, please call 207-727-3704 or email dstuart@mainepda.org

SEE YOU THERE