

# Caltrans Proposal Response

**SUBJECT:** Variance Revision

**Draft**

**DATE:** February 19, 2004

**POLICY:** CTPAC WG4-111203-001

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**I. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy by changing the width to 18 feet on yellow routes with 3 or more lanes in the California Highway Patrol escort table.**

***Caltrans Response:*** *At this time, the Caltrans Transportation Permit Program does not have an efficient means of determining the number of lanes on yellow routes.*

*If this were agreed on, a minimum distance that a highway consists of three lanes before the criteria applies would have to be created. Researching the number of lanes on a yellow route for each permit would make the permitting process less efficient.*

*If there was a field available and it didn't interfere with the proposed TPMS process, it is possible this information could be added to the database. However, incorporating the data into the database and, ultimately, TPMS would take time to research and input.*

***Caltrans Recommendation:*** *Do not change the width requirements on yellow routes with 3 or more lanes.*

**II. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy by changing the width to 17 feet on yellow routes with 2 lanes and where the transport vehicle width is not more than 10 feet in the California Highway Patrol escort table.**

***Caltrans Response:*** *Yellow routes currently have two or more 11 – 12 foot lanes and 4 – 8 foot of paved shoulder.*

*If it is assumed that the permittee travels with their tires on the fog line and the load is centered on the transport vehicle, a 16 foot wide load would encroach 3 feet into the shoulder on the passenger side. If lanes are 12 feet wide, a 16-foot wide load would encroach one foot into the adjoining lane on the driver's side, leaving 11 feet of lane for adjacent vehicles to use. If lanes are 11 feet wide, a 16-foot wide load would encroach two feet into the adjoining lane on the driver's side, leaving 10 feet of lane for adjacent vehicles to use.*

*The problem with this hypothesis that it requires the permittee to always drive on the fog line. If construction, a stalled vehicle on the shoulder, etc. is encountered, requiring the permittee to move towards the driver's side in their lane, available lane width in the adjoining lane will be*

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*significantly reduced. In addition, if the threshold width is increased from 16' to 17', available adjoining lane width on the driver's side will be reduced even more. Where traffic is insignificant and the majority of vehicles are 8'6" or less in width, 10 or 11 feet of available lane width may be adequate and the increased dimension may not be a problem. However, where traffic is significant, the increased width will probably be a problem.*

**Caltrans Recommendation:** *Do not change the width requirements on yellow routes with 2 lanes.*

### **III. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy by changing the width to 16 feet on green routes where the transport vehicle width is not more than 10 feet in the California Highway Patrol escort table.**

**Caltrans Response:** *A green route has a single 11 – 12 foot lane in each direction and 4 – 8 foot of paved shoulder.*

*If it is assumed that the permittee travels with their tires on the fog line and the load is centered on the transport vehicle, a 16 foot wide load would encroach 3 feet into the shoulder on the passenger side. If lanes are 12 feet wide, a 16-foot wide load would encroach one foot into the adjoining lane on the driver's side, leaving 11 feet of lane for adjacent vehicles to use. If lanes are 11 feet wide, a 16-foot wide load would encroach two feet into the adjoining lane on the driver's side, leaving 10 feet of lane for adjacent vehicles to use.*

*The problem with this hypothesis that it requires the permittee to always drive on the fog line. If construction, a stalled vehicle on the shoulder, etc. is encountered, requiring the permittee to move towards the driver's side in their lane, available lane width in the adjoining lane will be significantly reduced. In addition, if the threshold width is increased from 16' to 17', available adjoining lane width on the driver's side will be reduced even more. Where traffic is insignificant and the majority of vehicles are 8'6" or less in width, 10 or 11 feet of available lane width may be adequate and the increased dimension may not be a problem. However, where traffic is significant, the increased width will probably be a problem.*

**Caltrans Recommendation:** *Do not change the width requirements on green routes.*

### **IV. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy by removing the weight criteria from the California Highway Patrol escort table.**

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**Caltrans Response:** *The number of permits that are weight only, and no other variance dimension, are negligible if they even exist. If we keep the current dimensions, this issue would probably be eliminated.*

**Caltrans Recommendation:** *Eliminate the weight criteria from the California Highway Patrol escort table.*

- V. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy, with respect to speed, to those combinations that cannot maintain a speed equal to or greater than 20 miles per hour less than the route prevailing truck speed in the California Highway Patrol escort guidelines.**

**Caltrans Response:** *Research did not disclose any requests for California Highway Patrol escort for speed only.*

*There is no way for a permit writer to determine what a vehicle's speeds will be when traveling on the highway. From at least an economic standpoint, a transporter would always be encouraged to affirm that they could maintain the minimum speed to avoid California Highway Patrol escort.*

*If a permittee were required to maintain certain speeds, these speeds would have to be posted on their vehicle so enforcement knows what they are. If the minimum speed were not posted on the vehicle, the California Highway Patrol would not know if the permittee were violating this condition of the permit. Since this issue significantly impacts enforcement, traffic flow and safety, the California Highway Patrol would need to convey their support of and specifications for the proposal before any other aspect could be addressed.*

**Caltrans Recommendation:** *Eliminate any California Highway Patrol involvement for if a speed of at least 30 miles per hour less than speed limit can be maintained.*

- VI. A. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy, with respect to height, by deleting the 17 foot criteria from the California Highway Patrol escort table.**

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- B. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy, with respect to height, by stipulating that any fixed object with a clearance of 3 inches or less from the loaded combination and that requires the loaded combination to utilize opposing lanes to avoid the obstacle may require California Highway Patrol escort.**
- C. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise variance policy, with respect to height and length, to read that loads over 17 feet or 135 feet in length, respectively, may require a current route review.**

**Caltrans Response:** *A permit writer should have the option of requesting a route review if they think it is needed. For example, if a trip uses city streets, the customer should be required to explain how they will avoid signs, signals and other obstacles or make turns without traveling in the opposing lanes. The permit writer's ability to request California Highway Patrol escort, when they think any portion or the entire route justifies it, should not be eliminated.*

*If a load greater than 17 feet in height is traveling in an area where there are no vertical impairments such as lights, wires, street signs, signals, structures etc., it may be possible to eliminate the need for California Highway Patrol. In addition, it may be possible to eliminate the height requirement for California Highway Patrol escort on yellow routes.*

**Caltrans Recommendation:** *Eliminate the height criteria for yellow routes on the California Highway Patrol escort table.*

*Continue to require route reviews for all loads over 17' regardless of the route color.*

*California Highway Patrol escort shall be required anytime opposing lanes must be used.*

*A route review may be necessary, at the permit writer's discretion, after reviewing the application (because of dimensions, weights, route, etc.).*

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**VII. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise the variance policy, with respect to length, by removing the length criteria on yellow and green routes in the California Highway Patrol escort table.**

***Caltrans Response:** If a route review for every load greater than 135' in length is required, let the route determine when there is a need for CHP based on the information attained from the route review. This provides the necessary flexibility needed by the permit writer to request California Highway Patrol when deemed necessary but not requiring California Highway Patrol escort every time. The criteria mentioned in item VI above (having to move into opposing lanes, etc.) could be used.*

***Caltrans Recommendation:** See VI above.*

**VIII. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Caltrans shall maintain a database of routes used for variance loads. This information shall be made available to the public, at no cost, to the public. The database shall include a disclaimer that the data is out-dated and should be used for initial route review only.**

***Caltrans Response:** The information would have to be available to both regions. This would entail daily maintenance on the North Region server and copy to the South Region server (probably at night). This requires resources to accomplish (staff, time, etc.). Caltrans cannot create and maintain a variance route database at this time because of staffing issues.*

***Caltrans Recommendation:** Do not create a variance route database at this time.*

**IX. A. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - The California Highway Patrol shall be available for traffic control for short periods of time and/or distance by using on-duty officers, at their convenience and at no cost or for an hourly rate.**

**B. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - California Highway Patrol escorts will only be required on State portions of the route that require them unless two or more such sections are in close proximity**

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to each other and continuous escorting is agreed to by the transporter and the California Highway Patrol.

- C. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - The California Highway Patrol, Industry and Caltrans will enter into a partnership to help train the various individuals permitting, moving and escorting variance loads to insure safe, uniform and efficient practices. (Caltrans interrogatory: What is the intent of this item? Is this for pilot car escort issues, or permitting in general? More information is needed)**

**Caltrans Response:** *Caltrans has no jurisdiction over Variance Proposals IXA & B.*

*Even if Variance Proposal IXC was something agreed upon, Caltrans probably does not have the authority and resources to certify pilot car operators.*

**Caltrans Recommendation:** *Industry and the California Highway Patrol work together on Variance Proposals IXA & B.*

*Caltrans will not certify pilot car operators.*

- X. INDUSTRY PROPOSED REVISION - Revise variance policy to define a variance as one that involves California Highway Patrol escort.**

**Caltrans Response:** *At one time, industry asked that an application be classified as a variance only if it involved California Highway Patrol escort. If Caltrans adopted this revision, it would be difficult to categorize permit applications as a variance. An application is currently categorized as variance using dimensions and weight. Using California Highway Patrol escort as the sole criteria to categorize variance applications would decrease operating efficiency.*

*For example, in some cases, California Highway Patrol may be requested because of the nature of the route and not the dimensions or weight of the load. In such an instance, it may not be apparent to a permit writer that the application is a variance until the route is cleared. Only after the route had been cleared would the application be given to a variance writer for processing. The variance writer would then have to confer with the permit writer regarding the permit, rerun the route, verify any information that the transporter and permit writer discussed, etc. This scenario*

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*indicates a decrease in processing efficiency using a California Highway Patrol escort categorization criterion, as opposed to dimensions and weight, for variance categorization.*

**Caltrans Recommendation:** *Whether or not an application is a variance be determined according to loaded dimensions and weight.*