

**A STUDY OF
THE FEASIBILITY OF A SPECIAL GRADUATED
FARM TRUCK USE LICENSE FOR VIRGINIA**

**REPORTED TO
THE GOVERNOR
AND
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department of Purchases and Supply
Richmond
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THE FEASIBILITY OF A SPECIAL GRADUATED
FARM TRUCK USE LICENSE FOR VIRGINIA

A Report To
The Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia

Prepared by
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Commerce
The Division of Markets
Richmond, Virginia 23219

September, 1975



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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE
P. O. Box 1163, Richmond, Virginia 23209

November 3, 1975

The Honorable Mills E. Godwin, Jr., Governor of Virginia
The Honorable John N. Dalton, President of the Senate of Virginia
The Honorable John Warren Cooke, The Speaker of the House of
Delegates of Virginia
State Capitol
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Gentlemen:

The 1975 General Assembly by House Joint Resolution No. 253 directed the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Commerce to make a study and report on the feasibility of a special graduated farm truck use license for Virginia.

I am pleased to submit this report and, on the basis of our findings we believe that a special graduated farm truck use license for Virginia has merit.

We, therefore, recommend consideration be given to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'S. Mason Carbaugh'.

S. Mason Carbaugh
Commissioner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Discussion	
Agricultural Trucking.....	2
Special Graduated Farm Trucks Use License.....	7
Conclusions.....	9

SUMMARY

The 1975 General Assembly directed the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Commerce "to study the feasibility of a special graduated farm truck use license for Virginia."

In determining the feasibility of adopting a special graduated farm truck use license in Virginia the study examined the inventory and use characteristics of agricultural and non-agricultural trucks in Virginia and the motor-vehicle laws of all other states regarding the licensing of farm trucks.

According to the 1972 Census of Transportation, agricultural trucks account for only 16.6 percent of all trucks registered in Virginia, compared with 29.0 percent in 1963.

Agricultural trucks in Virginia pay a significantly higher license fee for miles used than non-agricultural trucks. In 1972 non-agricultural trucks in Virginia traveled an average of 86.3 percent more miles per truck than agricultural trucks, and when pickup and panel trucks were excluded this percentage increased to 150.0 percent.

A survey made by the Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles for this report showed that 35, or 71.4 percent, of the states provide a special graduated farm truck use license.

All of the states either defined or referred to the use of a farm truck in their code sections, and all except one required farm trucks to carry a special designated license plate.

Based on the finding of this study, a special graduated farm truck use license for Virginia seems feasible with certain limitations.

INTRODUCTION

This study was made in response to action by the Virginia House of Delegates and the Virginia Senate. In House Joint Resolution No. 253 the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Commerce was directed "to study the feasibility of a special graduated farm truck use license for Virginia."

In making this study we acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by the Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles and the United States Department of Commerce.

House Joint Resolution No. 253 approved by the 1975 General Assembly is as follows:

WHEREAS, farm trucks that presently are licensed usually are not used on the highways very much compared with commercial and private carriers; and

WHEREAS, farm trucks that presently are licensed are not usually for hire; and

WHEREAS, several states have adopted special graduated farm truck use licenses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Agriculture and Commerce is directed to make a study and report on the feasibility of a special graduated farm truck use license for Virginia. All State agencies shall assist the Department in this study.

The Department shall complete its study and report to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than December one, nineteen hundred seventy-five.

AGRICULTURAL TRUCKING

In this study the term truck is used in its commonly accepted sense as being a property carrying vehicle used on public highways and streets. Technically, a truck may be a single unit or a combination. A combination consists of a power unit or truck-tractor and a trailing unit commonly known as a semi-

trailer and, when used in combination is referred to as a tractor-semitrailer or a tractor-trailer.

The truck inventory and use data in this report were developed from information obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Transportation, "1972 Truck Inventory and Use Survey: Virginia TC72-T-47," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1973. This truck inventory and use survey was included in the 1972 Census of Transportation and the next census is scheduled by law, for the data year 1977. The information from the U.S. Bureau of the Census presented in this report is based on a probability sample of private and commercial vehicles registered in Virginia in 1972.

The number of agricultural trucks in Virginia declined from 29.0 percent of all trucks in 1963 to 16.6 percent in 1972, while the number of non-agricultural trucks increased from 71.0 percent in 1963 to 83.4 percent in 1972. (Table 1)

TABLE 1

Comparative Summary: 1963, 1967 and 1972 (Percent)

Item	1963	1967	1972
Total trucks	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	29.0	20.7	16.6
Non-Agriculture	71.0	79.3	83.4

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Transportation, 1972
Truck Inventory and Use Survey: Virginia

Agricultural trucks travel 46.3 percent less than non-agricultural trucks and when pickups and panels are excluded this proportion increases to 60 percent. Agricultural trucks traveled an average of 7,300 miles per truck in 1972, while

non-agricultural trucks averaged 13,600 miles per truck. Thus non-agricultural trucks traveled an average of 6,300 or 86.3 percent more miles per truck than agricultural trucks. Excluding pickups and panels agricultural trucks traveled an average of 8,400 miles per truck while non-agricultural trucks traveled an average of 21,000 miles per truck. This shows that non-agricultural trucks traveled an average of 12,600 or 150.0 percent more miles per truck than agricultural trucks when pickups and panels were excluded. (Table 2)

TABLE 2

Trucks, Truck Miles and Average Miles, by Vehicle and Operational Characteristics: 1972

Vehicle and Operational Characteristics	No. of truck & truck miles			No. of truck and truck miles excluding pickups and panels		
	Trucks (thous.)	Truck mis. (millions)	Avg. mis. per truck (thous.)	Trucks (thous.)	Truck mis. (millions)	Avg. mis. per truck (thous.)
Total	395	4,955	12.5	110	2,067	18.7
Agriculture	66	482	7.3	19	158	8.4
Non-Agriculture	329	4,473	13.6	91	1,909	21.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Transportation, 1972
Truck Inventory and Use Survey: Virginia

In 1972, 70.8 percent of all agricultural trucks were driven fewer than 10,000 miles each, while 44.1 percent of all non-agricultural trucks traveled less than 10,000 miles each. (Table 3)

TABLE 3

Trucks - Percent Distribution of Major Use Classes, by Vehicle and Operational Characteristics 1972

Vehicle and Operational Characteristics	<u>Agriculture</u>	Non-Agriculture
Total Trucks	100.0	100.0
Annual Miles:		
Less than 5,000	35.9	21.0
5,000 to 9,999	34.9	23.1
10,000 to 19,999	26.7	37.0
20,000 to 29,999	2.0	10.0
30,000 to 49,999	0.2	5.7
50,000 to 74,999	0.1	1.0
75,000 miles or more	0.1	2.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Transportation, 1972
Truck Inventory and Use Survey: Virginia

In this report trucks are classified by gross vehicle weight as light, medium, light-heavy and heavy-heavy. A light truck is one with a weight of 10,000 pounds or less; a medium truck is one with a weight of 10,001-20,000 pounds; a light-heavy truck is one with a weight of 20,001-26,000 pounds; and a heavy-heavy truck is one with a weight of 26,001 pounds or more.

In 1972, light trucks accounted for 77.1 percent of all trucks in Virginia. Such trucks, including pickups and panels, have limited potential for moving large quantities of agricultural commodities to and from markets. During the same year, 77.9 percent of all agricultural trucks in Virginia were classified as light trucks, 10.1 percent as medium trucks, 8.9 percent as light-heavy trucks, 3.0 percent as heavy-heavy trucks. By comparison, 76.4 percent of all non-agricultural trucks were classified as light trucks, 7.4 percent as medium trucks, 5.5 percent as light-heavy trucks and 10.0 percent as heavy-heavy trucks. (Table 4)

TABLE 4

Trucks - Percent Distribution of Size Classes and Operational Characteristics:
1972

Size Classes	<u>Total</u>	Agriculture	Non-Agriculture
Total Trucks	100.0	100.0	100.0
Light	77.1	79.9	76.4
Medium	8.0	10.1	7.4
Light-heavy	6.0	8.9	5.5
Heavy-heavy	9.0	3.0	10.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Transportation, 1972
Truck Inventory and Use Survey: Virginia.

SPECIAL GRADUATED FARM TRUCK USE LICENSE

The motor vehicle laws of other states relating to the issuance of special graduated farm truck use licenses were obtained from a survey conducted by the Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles during April, 1975. The purpose of this survey was to determine which states provide for a special graduated farm truck use license. States with a special provision were requested to furnish their vehicle code sections regarding the fee schedules, the requirements, and the other characteristics for such trucks plus fee schedules for trucks not included in this category.

The term "special graduated farm truck use license" in this report denotes a type of license that does not restrict operation of the truck to a specific distance.

The Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles' survey resulted in replies from all of the 49 states contacted. The survey disclosed that 71.4 percent or 35 states provide for a special graduated farm truck use license.

These states may be divided further into groups based on fee-weight schedule specifications, as follows:

18 states have a complete fee schedule based on weight to the maximum load limit permitted by state law -- Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.

14 states have a complete fee schedule based on weight, but restricted to a specific weight limit, less than the maximum load limit permitted by state law -- Alabama, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah and Vermont.

3 states have a complete fee schedule based on weight, but restricted to both a specific minimum and maximum weight limit -- Iowa, Maine and West Virginia.

All 35 of these states either defined or referred to the use of a farm truck in their code sections.

The code sections of all 35 states except Georgia require farm trucks to carry a special designated license plate.

The code section of each of the 35 states pertaining to the licensing of farm trucks and also the fee schedules based on weight for both farm and non-farm trucks are available if desired.

CONCLUSIONS

The percentage of revenue derived from the licensing of farm trucks, when compared to all trucks registered, is declining. Agricultural trucks accounted for only 16.6 percent of all trucks registered in Virginia in 1972, compared with 29.0 percent in 1963.

Agricultural trucks travel, on the average, less miles per truck than non-agricultural trucks, and currently pay a significantly higher license fee for miles traveled than non-agricultural trucks. In 1972, the average miles traveled by agricultural trucks was 53.7 percent of the average miles traveled by non-agricultural trucks. When pickups and panel trucks were excluded the average for agricultural trucks drops to 40 percent.

More than three-fourths of all agricultural trucks are classified as light trucks. This classification includes both pickups and panels, which have limited potential for moving large quantities of agricultural commodities to and from markets and in many instances are used for personal transportation and recreation. This suggests that agricultural trucks of 6,500 pounds or less should be excluded from those agricultural trucks in Virginia that would be eligible for a special farm truck use license. Such action would significantly reduce the number of agricultural trucks subject to a special graduated farm truck use license.

Since a significant number of states (35) have implemented a special graduated farm truck use license it is apparent that the need for such legislation has been recognized.

Although the fee weight specifications of all states vary, most provide a complete fee schedule based on the maximum weight permitted by state law.

The fact that all 35 states included in their code sections either a definition of or reference to farm trucks points to the need to provide for special conditions under which these trucks may operate.

The need to distinguish farm trucks from other trucks is recognized by all states except one. This would support the issuing of a special designated license plate in Virginia.

From the information available, it appears that Virginia should consider it feasible to institute a special graduated farm truck use license, with certain restrictions.

The study further indicates that certain provisions should be considered if Section 46.1-154 of the Motor Vehicle Laws of Virginia is amended to provide for this special graduated use license, as follows:

1. A "farm" should be defined as one or more tracts of land used to produce agricultural products, but does not include tracts owned and operated solely for the production of forestry products.
2. A "farmer" should be defined as an individual who is engaged, either as owner or renter, in a farm operation of a size to reasonably require the use of a vehicle or vehicles for which a special graduated farm truck use license is requested.
3. It would exclude trucks having a gross weight of 6,500 pounds or less; since they have limited potential for moving large quantities of agricultural commodities to and from markets and in many instances are used for personal transportation and recreation.
4. A complete fee schedule based on the maximum weight limit provided by law; since agricultural trucks are included in all size classifications.
5. It would specify the purpose for which a truck could be used to qualify for registration under this section; so that only trucks used exclusively for agricultural purposes would be eligible for the special rates.
6. Trucks entitled to be licensed under this section would be registered at 50 percent of the rate per thousand pounds of gross weight for private carriers; which would more equitably reflect the more limited usage of agricultural trucks compared with non-agricultural trucks.

7. Trucks licensed under this section would be issued special designated license plates for enforcement purposes.
8. Application for a special farm truck use license would be made upon forms prepared by the Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles which currently issues licenses to all trucks registered in Virginia.

