PARKING FOR LONG DISTANCE DRIVERS

Introduction
The current provision for coach and lorry parking is reducing as many site owners redevelop existing facilities for more ‘profitable’ purposes, such as housing and commercial development, or because local authorities/adjoining occupiers consider that such parking is not desirable or that it downgrades the local area. Both Dover and Southampton are examples of where this is occurring despite the commercial benefits to these towns arising from the accommodation of road transport.

The European Working Time Directive for mobile workers, due to be introduced in 2005, will result in more drivers being employed in the logistics and coaching sector as drivers will be limited on the total number of hours they can work, with even more restrictions for those working at night. It is estimated that the impact of this will be that between 8,000 and 12,000 more trucks will be needed when the Directive is introduced, although the more efficient carriage of goods may reduce this. Parking congestion is likely to increase and more stop-overs and short-term break areas will be needed. The anticipated increased demand for parking spaces will not be met unless action is taken as a matter of some urgency.

Parking facility requirements of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers are different from those of coach drivers as the needs of coach passengers must also be taken into account.

A number of issues have been identified during a discussion by members of the Parking Forum, these are:

- the health, safety and welfare of drivers
- the risks to other road users from inadequately rested drivers
- the risk of crime against drivers and their vehicles and cargo unless parked in secure facilities
- possible inefficiencies in transport as drivers waste time finding suitable parking or are unable to find long-stay but short-term secure parking
- the failure of local authorities to address this problem could place them in a position where they are failing to meet their obligations under S17 of the Crime and Disorder Act

This paper seeks to outline some of the problems currently experienced by HGV and coach operators and makes a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the issues identified.

HGV driver rest break requirement
HGV drivers are required by law to take a minimum 45 minute break from driving every 4½ hours. Whilst parked overnight they will require secure parking facilities for their vehicle and load together with adequate toilet and refreshment facilities. Having arrived at a location when a break needs to be taken the driver is not lawfully able to proceed if he/she is unable to find somewhere to park. It is now commonplace for drivers, finding that a motorway service area does not have sufficient parking space, to drive out of the service area and park on the hard shoulder before walking back to the service area. Apart from this activity being unlawful there are significant safety concerns about this practice. On the other hand, what else can drivers do?

Coach driver rest break requirement
Coach drivers are also currently required to take a break from driving every 4½ hours. When parked they will need toilet facilities, an area where their passengers can walk freely and safely, and refreshment services. Having arrived at a location when a break needs to be taken the driver is not lawfully able to proceed without taking a break. The use of two drivers per vehicle is increasing, so the need to stop the progress of the vehicle for driver breaks may not be as great as for HGV drivers - the time may be needed only for drivers to change and for some passengers to 'stretch their legs'.

**Provision of extra and/or improved parking facilities**
It is reported that many motorway service area operators would be prepared to expand their parking facilities if the cost of acquiring land was not prohibitive and obtaining the appropriate planning consent not so difficult.

We understand that Nightowl is upgrading (at a cost of £1.25m) some of its sites by installing CCTV coverage, fencing, and entry/exit barriers. It is not clear however whether this will result in extra parking or just improved facilities – although clearly the latter will be welcome, both are needed.

The Highways Agency has been charged by John Spellar MP (Minister of Transport) to identify potential locations on its network where facilities might be provided for drivers to take a break.

HGV & coach drivers report that 'A' roads tend to have better stop-over points for drivers than other classes of road. These points could be signposted from motorways as alternative parking locations, despite objections from motorway service area operators who would have a potential loss of business (the Highways Agency also will not currently allow signage directing drivers to these locations).

**Secure stabling for HGVs and coaches**
When (away from their base) and not in use, HGVs and coaches need to be parked off the highway in a secure location. Vehicle operators are experiencing increasing difficulty in finding places where they might park their vehicles. Also, many hotels do not (and often cannot) provide coach stabling facilities for drivers where their passengers are staying overnight. It is clear from surveys undertaken that vehicle operators are prepared to pay for safe and secure parking.

The secondary use of existing parking facilities such as railway stations or Park and Ride sites where demand is low at particular times within each day should be investigated to see whether extra stabling facilities can be provided easily and relatively cheaply. There are some engineering and environmental concerns that would need to be taken into consideration.

**Operation of secure parking facilities**
Commercial parking operators have expressed an interest in providing parking facilities for coaches and lorries. Operators would be required to pay a commercial fee to use the facilities, although added-value services could be made available to encourage use of such sites. However, in the past these types of site have not been well-used although recent surveys of drivers show that they now would be prepared to pay for safe, secure facilities.

**Design Standards**
There are no published standards or guidance on what a facility should comprise of or what standards should be adopted for factors such as size, layout, construction standards etc. It has been suggested that the Institution of Highways and
Transportation (IHT) could look at this with trade associations and others to develop guidance.

**Planning Guidance**

Although as a country we are dependent on road transport for moving goods and people around there is no guidance for planners on the need to provide facilities to enable this vital activity. What is required is clear guidance setting out the need for planners to consider the needs of large vehicles, both for secure places to allow drivers to rest and for secure parking for the vehicles when they are not at their base and not in use. It is suggested that the government should be requested to produce a planning policy Guidance Note to address this issue.

**Recommendations**

Route operators such as highways authorities and the Highways Agency should be required to provide sufficient secure spaces for all drivers who are required by law to take a break. This may need to include signing on the location and availability of spaces away from a heavily trafficked road, where sufficient parking spaces cannot be easily provide.

Highway authorities should, as part of their Unitary Development Plan and their Local Transport Plan (LTP) submission, be required to identify and safeguard places where HGVs and coaches may be parked securely during the working day and overnight. The use of areas such as Park & Ride sites and station car parks for overnight parking should be considered, although this may require strengthening of the parking surface to take heavier vehicles and the removal of height and width restrictions as the entrance/exit to any site.

A design guide should be produced to set out good practice in the design of parking facilities for commercial vehicles.

Planning policy guidance should be produced setting out the need for local authorities to make provision for large vehicle parking as part of the transport infrastructure.

There should be a study of current and anticipated demand for HGV and coach parking spaces over the short- to medium-term to inform the planning process.

A Secure HGV/Coach Park Award should be introduced similar to the Secured Car Parks Award Scheme.

The introduction of commercially operated vehicle parks at strategic locations on the highway network should be encouraged with a view to testing the market. Such a facility could be opened in conjunction with a freight transfer facility such as docks or other type of trans-shipment centre.

A Transport Impact Assessment should be commissioned to determine the effect of the Working Time Directive on the demand for both short-term and long-term parking spaces for HGVs and coaches. Government is required to produce a full Regulatory Impact Assessment. This is currently underway, although the consequences for the need for better parking is unlikely to feature.