

Movement of Oversize Loads in Other Jurisdictions
For the Senate Joint No. 26 Study

Prepared for the Revenue & Transportation Interim Committee
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The Senate Joint Resolution No. 26 study of the movement of oversize loads in Montana requests that the committee "look to other states or Canadian provinces for legislative methods or means enacted to foster the transport of oversize loads through various public jurisdictions, including by establishing or authorizing the establishment of commerce corridors."¹ This report discusses Alberta's High Load Corridors, updates the committee on recent developments in moving oversize loads through Idaho, and covers Minnesota's Super-Haul Load Corridors.

Alberta

The Canadian Province of Alberta has a High Load Corridor in which utility lines were raised to accommodate loads up to 9 meters (29.5 feet) in height. The Alberta Department of Transportation funded the corridor construction, and the cost is recovered through permit fees. The fee per kilometer for a High Load Corridor Permit is:

- for a load between 6 meters and 8.9 meters: \$1 plus \$0.20 for every 10 centimeters over 6 meters in height; or
- for a load over 8.9 meters, \$6.80.

The following examples show two possible moves on Alberta's High Load Corridor and the cost in U.S. dollars.

Route	Distance (km)	Distance (miles)	Height (meters)	Height (feet)	High Load Permit Fee (US dollars) ²
Cochrane to Valley View	620	385.25	7	23	\$1,780
Brooks to Wainright	371	230.5	9	29.5	\$2,415

A vehicle traveling on the High Load Corridor would also be subject to an overdimensional fee of \$15 for a single trip or \$60 for multiple trips. If the vehicle is also overlength, there would be an additional \$300 permit fee. An overweight vehicle is also subject to an overweight fee.

¹Though the term "commerce corridors" is used in the study resolution, it does not seem to be a widely used term for routes accessible to oversize vehicles. This report will use the term "oversize load corridors".

²The currency conversion was made using a daily currency converter on the Bank of Canada website on November 5, 2013.

The Alberta Department of Transportation [High Load Corridor map](#) also includes corridors established by an entity other than the Department of Transportation. These routes were established by private entities and are not subject to the High Load Corridor Permit Fee. In addition, the Department of Transportation provides a map of [Long Combination Vehicle routes](#) in the province. The Long Combination Vehicle routes seem to follow main thoroughfares more so than the High Load Corridors. This may be because the main routes have bridges that preclude overheight vehicles from using those routes.

Idaho

Idaho is included in this briefing because an update was requested at the organizational meeting on the movement of oversize vehicles in Idaho and it serves as an example of some of the issues surrounding the movement of oversize loads. Moves through Idaho on U.S. Highway 12 have generated some controversy and the involvement of the U.S. District Court.

In February 2013, U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill ruled in response to a lawsuit filed by a conservation group that the Forest Service had a role in the state Department of Transportation's decision to permit oversize loads and that the Forest Service acted "unlawfully" by not being involved in previous oversize load shipment permitting.³

The Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Service developed three standards for moves through the Lochsa-Clearwater Wild and Scenic River Corridor: traffic should never be fully stopped to allow passage of an oversize load, loads must pass through the area in 12 hours or less, and there should be no physical modification of the roadway or adjacent vegetation beyond normal maintenance.⁴

The oversize load that created controversy in early August 2013, ultimately moved through Idaho on U.S. Highway 12. Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Service supervisor Rick Brazell sent a letter to the company moving the load, Omega Morgan, objecting to the travel plan,⁵ but Brazell indicated to the Lewiston Tribune that he did not believe the Forest Service had authority to stop the loads.⁶ The Idaho Department of Transportation ultimately issued permits for the load but urged Omega Morgan to consult with the Forest Service.⁷

The movement triggered protests for three nights before the Nez Perce Tribe and Idaho Rivers United filed a lawsuit in federal court aiming to stop the shipment and prevent other planned oversize loads

³Associated Press, "Forest Service Says No to Highway 12 Megaload," June 22, 2013.

⁴Kim Briggeman, "Forest Service Halts Highway 12 Megaloads," July 24, 2013.

⁵Associated Press, "Megaload Resumes Journey After Tribal Blockade," Aug. 6, 2013.

⁶"Nez Perce Tribe Opposes Megaloads," Independent Record, Aug. 5, 2013.

⁷Associated Press, "Environmentalists Mulling Megaload Legal Options," Aug. 7, 2013.

from using that route.⁸ The load moved in August made it through Idaho, but in September, Judge Winmill granted an injunction to halt future loads through the federally designated Wild and Scenic Corridor asking the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests to assess the impacts the proposed move of a water evaporator would have on the route and to meet with the Nez Perce Tribe over its concerns.⁹

Following the judge's ruling, the Northern Region forest administrator signed an order closing a 100-mile section of the Wild and Scenic River Corridor to loads exceeding 16 feet in width and 150 feet in length or that take more than 12 hours to travel through the corridor.¹⁰

In October, General Electric asked Judge Winmill to reconsider his injunction preventing the oversize moves. Judge Winmill rejected the request.¹¹ On October 25, the company dropped its emergency motion to stay the injunction and General Electric issued a statement indicating it would work on alternative shipment options.¹²

Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Transportation identifies what it refers to as "[Super-Haul Corridor routes](#)." The purpose for designating these routes is to acknowledge that the routes are currently used to move oversize loads and to prevent future improvements that could make the routes inaccessible to oversize loads.¹³ The roadways were designated because they could generally accommodate a loaded vehicle with a 16-foot height limit, a 16-foot width limit with an 8-foot wide axle, a 130-foot length limit, and a 235,000 pound weight limit. There is also a preference for a diamond-shaped interchange rather than other designs, such as a cloverleaf interchange that requires the vehicle to make an almost 360-degree turn.

The freight study that discusses these Super-Haul Corridor routes identifies height as the most difficult permit issue. The reason for this is that Minnesota bridges are designed to be 16 feet 4 inches tall. A safety margin of 6 inches is required on all moves, so a bridge must be 16 feet 6 inches to accommodate a 16-foot-tall load.

Summary

Oversize load corridors could be established to achieve a few different purposes. At the most basic level, identifying accessible routes for oversize loads by creating a map of such routes may assist those moving oversize loads. The Alberta Department of Transportation map of Long Combination Vehicle

⁸Associated Press, "Federal Lawsuit Filed to Stop Megaload; Rig Moves Up Highway 12," Aug. 9, 2013.

⁹Associated Press, "Judge Agrees to Halt Highway 12 Megaloads For Now,

¹⁰Associated Press, "U.S. Forest Service Shuts Down Highway 12 to Megaloads," Sept. 19, 2013.

¹¹Associated Press, "Judge Again Says No to Megaloads on Highway 12," Oct. 11, 2013.

¹²Associated Press, "Highway 12: GE Subsidiary Gives Up Megaload Battle," Oct. 25, 2013.

¹³Minnesota Department of Transportation, "Western Minnesota Regional Freight Study Final Report," September 2009, p. ES-9.

(LCV) routes is an example. An extended length vehicle is subject to a \$300 permit fee but the fee is not directly connected to use of the routes identified on the map of LCV routes and the fee does not reimburse costs for construction of these routes.

Another goal of establishing oversize load corridors may be to publicize the routes in hopes that future improvements to the routes will not inhibit the movement of oversize loads. The Minnesota Super-Haul Corridor routes are an example. While Minnesota does not seem to have statutory or regulatory language prohibiting improvements that adversely affect the corridors, a state could include such language in statute if that is an area of concern.

A state wishing to participate in the construction of an oversize load corridors could follow the Alberta example of its High Load Corridor. Alberta financed the construction of the route and collects permit fees to recover the costs. Other routes that accommodate overheight loads are also recognized on Alberta's map, but those routes do not require the High Load Corridor fee because they were funded by a private entity, not the state.

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