



July 28, 2021

The Honorable Jared Polis  
Governor of Colorado  
State Capitol Building  
Denver, CO 80203

Executive Director Shoshana Lew  
Colorado Department of Transportation  
2829 W Howard Pl  
Denver, CO 80204

**RE: Request for Action to Address Supply Chain Problems**

Dear Governor Polis and Director Lew,

We are writing to ask for your assistance in addressing a critical problem facing our supply chain within the state today. The issue relates to having an adequate supply of trucks and drivers to address the multitude of needs of our economy and state at this time. A combination of factors have acted to stress the supply chain helping to create fuel shortages, significant delays or deferrals of construction projects, difficulty in moving agricultural products as well as other materials to support our farmers and ranchers, delays in providing critical materials for manufacturers, embargoing of freight for days if not weeks affecting retail and various other businesses and more. The net result is not only a significant impact on individual businesses but one that is beginning to affect our overall economy in the state as we seek to recover from the impacts of COVID.

There is no single reason for the stress on the supply chain but rather several factors. First and foremost though is a truckdriver shortage in the state. We have the greatest shortage in truckdrivers in our state than at any time in our history, almost every company that operates heavy trucks is seeking drivers leading to many trucks sitting idle for lack of an operator. Looking at Indeed, the leading employment website provides a sense of the magnitude of the problem. If one queries "truckdriver positions in Colorado", they list 4800 postings in Colorado. Realizing that the majority of those companies are seeking multiple drivers, the shortfall of drivers may be upward to 15,000 to 20,000. This is despite rapidly increasing pay for these positions where the compensation is significantly above the state median. Part of this problem

stemmed from the pandemic when many older truckdrivers chose to retire in the past year over health concerns related to COVID and the contracted economy.

A second stressor has been due to road closures and detours. Due to heavy rainfall and a lack of vegetation in burn scar areas of the state, we have seen multiple closures of I-70 in the Glenwood Canyon area and other sections of the corridor for several hours up to more than a day. The detour option around the canyon may extend trips by anywhere from 2 ½ hours to 5 hours depending upon traffic volumes. In addition to I-70, SH 14 was closed due for several days due to flash flooding, US 6 over Loveland Pass along with SH 141 southeast of Grand Junction, and SH 149 near Lake City have all been recently closed due to mudslides. The net result is delays and longer routes and travel time to supply Colorado communities and businesses.

Based on federal safety rules related to hours of service, truckdrivers may only spend so many hours driving daily and then must take a mandated 10 hour rest break. The detours and delays translates into longer travel time for various deliveries, reducing the number of trips that can be made and exacerbating the driver shortage.

A third factor affecting the supply chain has been the combination of the economy coming back faster than anticipated along with the high volume of visitors to state. This has stretched available fuel sources and greatly increased demand for many other products which are transported by truck. In particular, the uptick in construction and building activity has created substantial pressure for the movement of a range of resources and products to fuel those activities. Adding to this is harvest season which has begun in the state (note Palisade peaches and other fruits and vegetables) with even heavier demand to come in the late summer and early fall. Farmers and ranchers are already experiencing challenges in moving products or finding transporters to transport them to market.

Last year Governor Polis responded to the COVID-19 crisis by approving an emergency waiver that temporarily raised the maximum weight of trucks allowed on the Colorado interstate from 80,000 to 85,000 pounds. This action harmonized truck weights on the Colorado interstate highways with the weight limit on non-interstate highways which has been 85,000 pounds for many years. This action was sought because the interstate highway system in many cases is the most direct and possibly only route to reach certain locations efficiently in the state.

The Governor's action proved critical in meeting unprecedented public demand for medical equipment, food, and other key products. This critical action reduced the number of overall trucks and drivers needed to meet the demands for crucial supplies, including PPE, ventilators, and hospital beds which were essential to the health and safety of the public during the pandemic.

***We would indicate that the current status of the supply chain is much more precarious than it was in the past year under COVID. Without some action we believe that we will see continued shortages on a wide range of products for lack of enough truckdrivers and trucks to move the needed freight in a timely manner. In particular we anticipate problems on the West Slope because many of the distribution centers for food, fuel, and other products are based in the Denver Metro Area.*** With the ongoing challenges associated with I-70, construction activity on US 50 near Montrose, and the limited number of routes (many of which

are two-lane) to serve the West Slope, the condition could worsen. This situation could become even more serious if, as in the past summers, wildfires erupt in areas on the West Slope and impact corridors and access to communities.

**In light of this serious matter and the implications of it on the state's economy, we are asking that you issue an Executive Order to raise temporarily the maximum weight for trucks on our interstate highways to 85,000 lbs., which is consistent with other state highways in Colorado. The additional 5,000 lbs. will reduce the number of trucks and drivers and in turn help to mitigate our supply chain problem. We are requesting that the Order run through the end of August.**

Please note that when the interstate weight was raised to 85,000 pounds last year during the COVID crisis, the State did not see any increase in truck accidents. Further the weight change resulted in fewer trucks and less vehicle miles traveled which translated into lower emissions and greenhouse gases.

Realizing the importance of this matter to our state and its economy, the following organizations on the attached page request your support for action on this matter:

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely requested by the following organizations:

Colorado Motor Carriers Association

Colorado Wyoming Petroleum Marketers Assoc.

Colorado Contractors Association

Colorado Farn Bureau

Colorado Asphalt Paving Association

Colorado Ready Mix Concrete Association

Colorado Stone, Sand and Gravel Association

Club 20

Progressive 15

Colorado Association of Wheat Growers Association

Colorado Cattlemen's Association

Colorado Livestock Association

Dairy Farmers of America