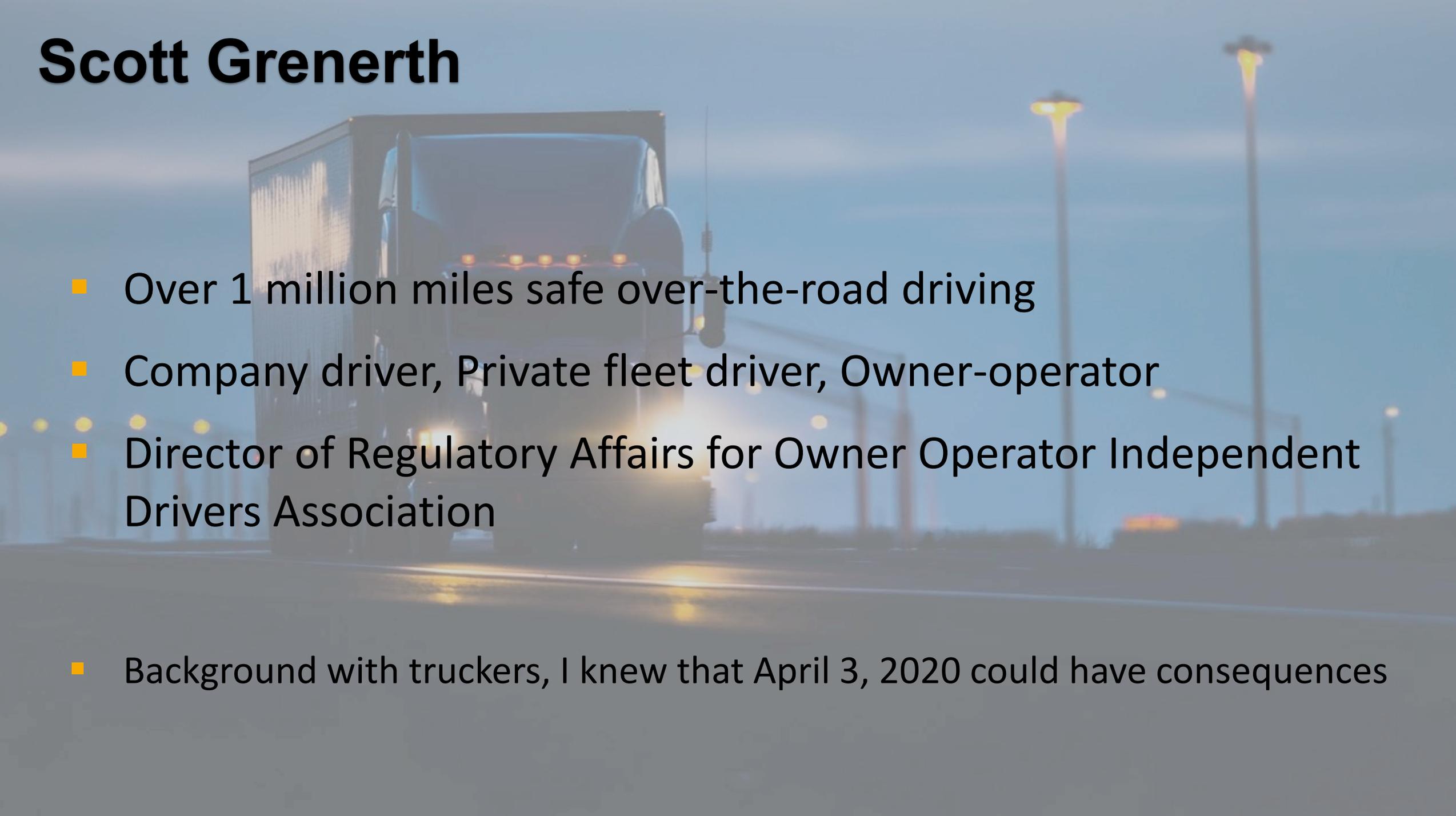




***Finding a Food Truck  
Responses by State DOTs  
Realities Truckers Experienced  
Opportunities to Adjust for Future Responses***

# Scott Grenerth



- Over 1 million miles safe over-the-road driving
- Company driver, Private fleet driver, Owner-operator
- Director of Regulatory Affairs for Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association
- Background with truckers, I knew that April 3, 2020 could have consequences

# **COVID 19 Impact - Broadly**

- Shortages of some items
- Stores cutting back on hours
- State, county, and city level closures of food service

# Over-The-Road Trucker Impact

May 5

TravelCenters of America is slowly reopening dine-in restaurants at its travel plazas where allowed, but some changes forced by the COVID-19 pandemic may never be reversed.

"We have already undertaken rolling some locations on and we're doing it in a prudent and self-disciplined way," TA CEO Jon Pertchik said on a first-quarter earnings call on Tuesday.

That means fewer hours, about half as many menu items, and as little as 25% occupancy based on state-by-state guidelines.

Freight Waves: Alan Adler, Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Aug 5

After reopening some of its restaurants in May, TravelCenters of America Inc is in the process of closing restaurants again due to the "recent increase in COVID-19 infections in several states," it reported in its second-quarter 2020 earnings press release.

Yahoo Finance: Aug 5, 2020

# Over-The-Road Trucker Impact

- Prepared meals and even a cup of coffee are harder to purchase
  - Drive thru only- NOT in a semi
  - Walk up to the drive thru- NO “liability”
- Limited stock at stores impacts ability for trucker to restock
  - Even coffee to make in the truck
- Some food service hours at truck stops are cut back substantially
  - Cannot rely on restaurant/fast food service 24/7
  - Evening/late evening service cut at many locations

# Over-The-Road Trucker Impact

- Truckers are at the mercy of shippers and receivers to impact their schedule/planning
  - End up unexpectedly searching for food later in the day/evening, closed now
- Truckers with smaller cabs, and those not permitted to have plug-in coolers are more reliant upon outside sources for food



Truckers  
don't have  
this



Even if you  
do, how to  
restock it?

# Rest Areas Status Before April 3

- Since 1930s, prohibition on commercialization of rest areas along federal aid highway system
- Randolph-Sheppard Act only permits vending machines, operated by visually impaired



# April 3, 2020

- Notice of Enforcement Discretion which stated that through the duration of the National Emergency the FHWA would not enforce the prohibition against commercial activity in order to allow states, which choose to participate in this program, to allow food trucks in rest areas.
- My words: You still aren't allowed to do this, but we won't stop you.
- No end date to the Notice, as long as National Emergency declared

# Reaction? Some immediate

- Arkansas
- Indiana
- Ohio
  - Free application
  - Basically one rule, not compete with the aforementioned vending machine operators. Not permitted to sell canned sodas but were very explicitly told they could sell freshly made coffee.



**Ohio Dept of Transportation** ✓

@ODOT\_Statewide · Apr 10, 2020



Food truck operators can now set up at ODOT-maintained rest areas. This is an effort to better serve the truck drivers who play a vital role in helping [#FlattenTheCurve](#). Permits are available here: [transportation.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov...](https://transportation.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov...) [#InThisTogetherOhio](#)



**Ohio rest areas  
are now open  
to food truck  
operators**



- Ohio: Approximately 275 applications were submitted to ODOT by food truck operators to set up in Ohio's 86 rest areas.



Michael Tater, WTOL, April 16: **Bowling Green, OH, I-75 Northbound**



**Amber Taylor** @TaylorA30 · Apr 12, 2020



Replying to [@ODOT\\_Statewide](#)

I don't drive a semi but I do drive a huge box truck for work all day and it's hard to get lunch during the day. (truck doesn't fit in a drive through) So this is awesome!! Thank you!!



The Ohio Department of Transportation has announced that as of 7 a.m. April 14, more than 200 food trucks statewide have signed up for permits to operate at ODOT-maintained rest stops.

**Ohio Dept of Transportation** @ODOT\_Statewide

As of this morning, 219 food trucks have signed up for a FREE permit. Please note, ODOT does NOT operate the @OhioTurnpike and this permit is not valid at their service plazas.

**Ohio Dept of Transportation** @ODOT\_Statewide

Food truck operators can now set up at ODOT-maintained rest areas. This is an effort to better serve the truck drivers who play a vital role in helping #FlattenTheCurve. Permits are available here: transportation.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov... #InThisTogetherOhio



**Ohio rest areas are now open to food truck**

Advertisement

Advertisement for US Bank: Earn \$300 when you open a new account. Subject to certain conditions and qualifications. Member FDIC. Includes US Bank logo and a 'Learn more' button.

# Capture data

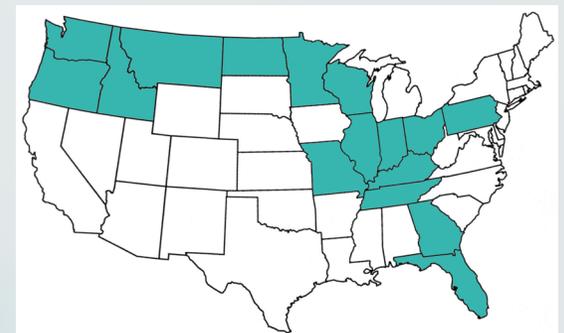
- July/September

# What Did I Hear From OTR Truckers?

- Direct feedback from friends
- Sirius/XM radio trucker program guest appearances
- Moderated Facebook trucker forums.
  
- I asked:
  - Have you seen any food trucks?
  - Has this effort been helpful to you?

Kari and Lee Fisher  
July 31

“We did see food being handed out for free in Florida, but **no** food trucks in: GA, TN, KY, MO, IL, IN, OH, NY, PA, WI, MN, MT, ND, ID, WA, OR.”



Jeff Barker  
July 31

“It was harder to find food a couple of months ago. I utilized Door Dash at least once and ordered a few days worth of food at a time.”

“I did see at least one food truck in Arkansas at some point.”



Greg Huggins  
July 14

“Saw one food truck along I-40 CA to AZ, middle of nowhere. Only notice was a small sign propped up at entry to rest area. About two months ago.”



Sandy and Stephen Goche  
July 14

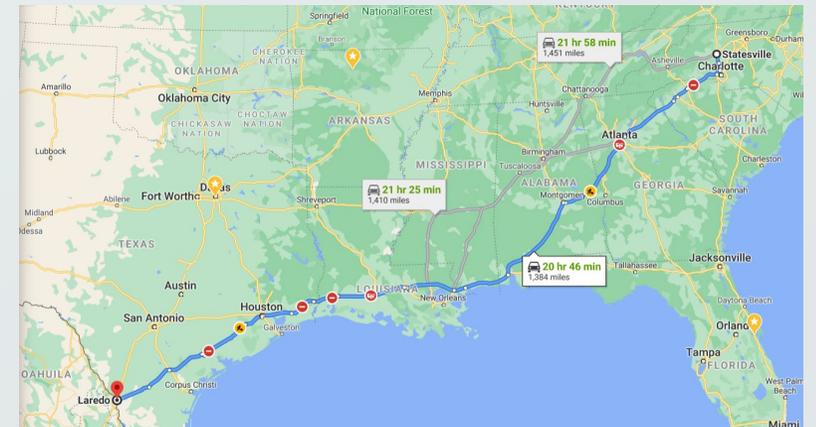
“Saw some early on across I-70 IN and OH, no signage to let you know ahead. They were all being utilized every time. It looked like they were all possibly from the same company operating the food trucks across that area.”



Henry Albert  
July 14

“I had a some more difficulty finding some food, a little bit harder to find a cup of coffee. Seemed like there was a lot of hype that it was worse.”

“I have not seen a food truck.”



Shane Rizzuto

July 14

“At my favorite truck stop in Washington State the Subway has been closed, the Iron Skillet restaurant has had very limited options.”

“No food trucks, Colorado to Canada is my run.”



Melissa Bird Kropf

July 10

“I saw them in a **few** states. California, Arizona and can't recall the 3rd. Maybe Oregon? They were only at a couple though. We were hoping to see more. With the restaurants all closed down being on the road for 4 weeks was rough to say the least. I run all 48 states as a team. The ones I saw were not marked so we didn't see them until we were driving by. One did have a sign. I believe it was one in California on I-5.”



Bryan Spoon  
July 7

“I saw one in Indiana on I-74 coming out of Cincinnati.

Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb mentioned the food trucks in a broadcast. I think he said IN had 20 of them at different locations.”

“We needed this 3 weeks before it actually started.”



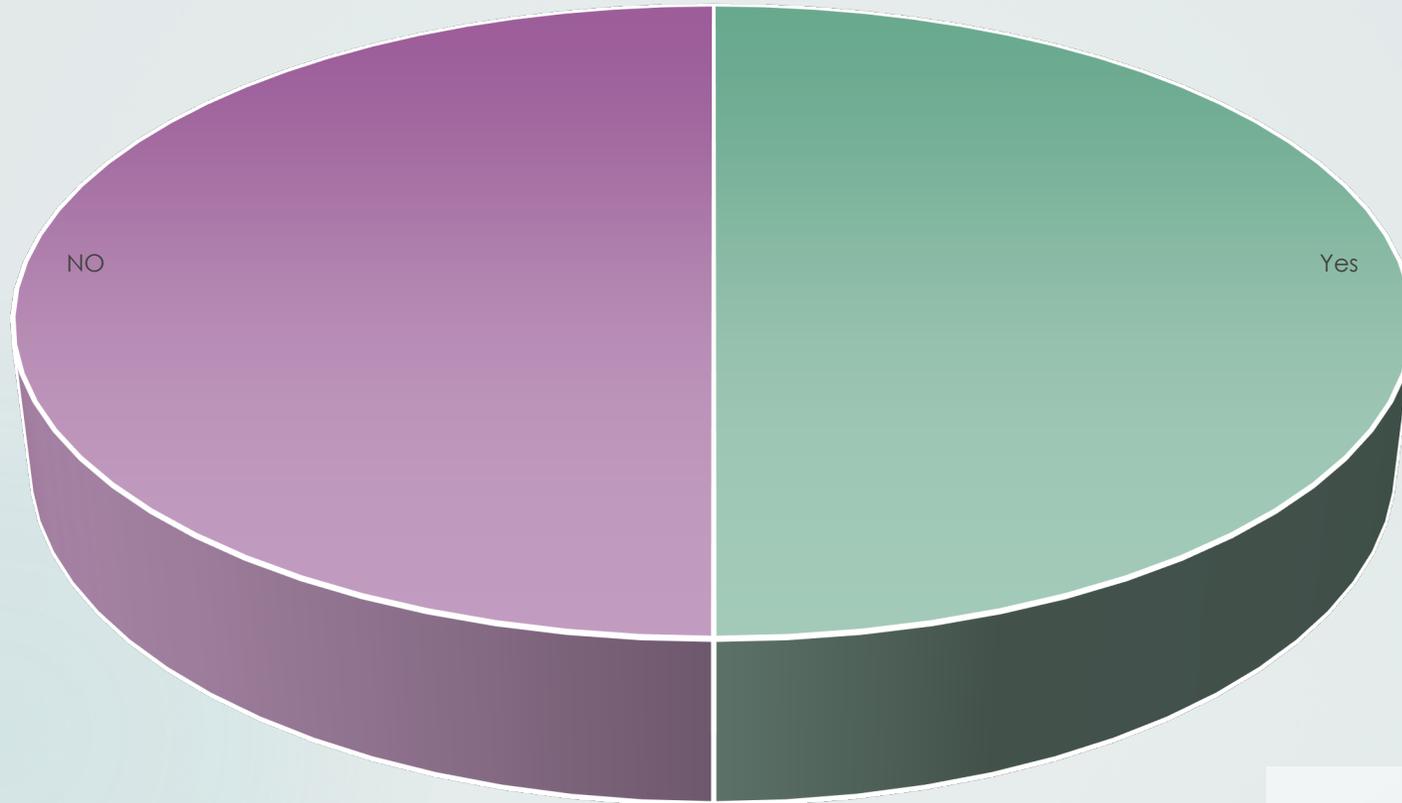
Johanne Couture  
July 7

“I only saw one on I-75 in Ohio. When I woke up at 10 am about every second truck driver I saw utilized it. It was parked on the car side of rest area. The truckers took the time to walk over to it.”



56

Questioned



Did you see at least one food truck?

Yes

NO

**Since April, have you seen and/or visited a food truck operating out of a public rest area along your routes?**

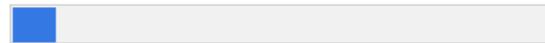
**No, I've not seen any food trucks at rest areas**

73.14% (207 votes)



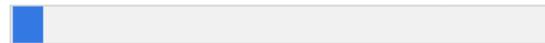
**Yes, I've seen a few but never visited**

8.13% (23 votes)



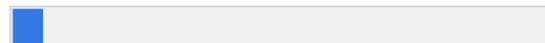
**Yes, I've eaten at a rest-area food truck numerous times**

5.65% (16 votes)



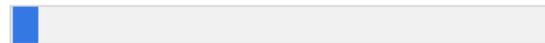
**Yes, I've eaten at a food truck a few times**

5.65% (16 votes)



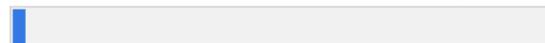
**Yes, I've seen several but never tried one**

4.95% (14 votes)



**Yes, I've eaten once at a food truck**

2.47% (7 votes)



Total Votes: 283

Overdrive Online: Todd Dills,  
Retrieved September 2020

**No 50 %**  
**Yes 50 %**

?

**No 73 %**  
**Yes 27 %**

My questions- to people I know with zero bias

Overdrive poll- replies from those interested in the topic

Question was, at least –one- food truck,...over many tens of thousands of miles across multiple states.

# Feedback from survey

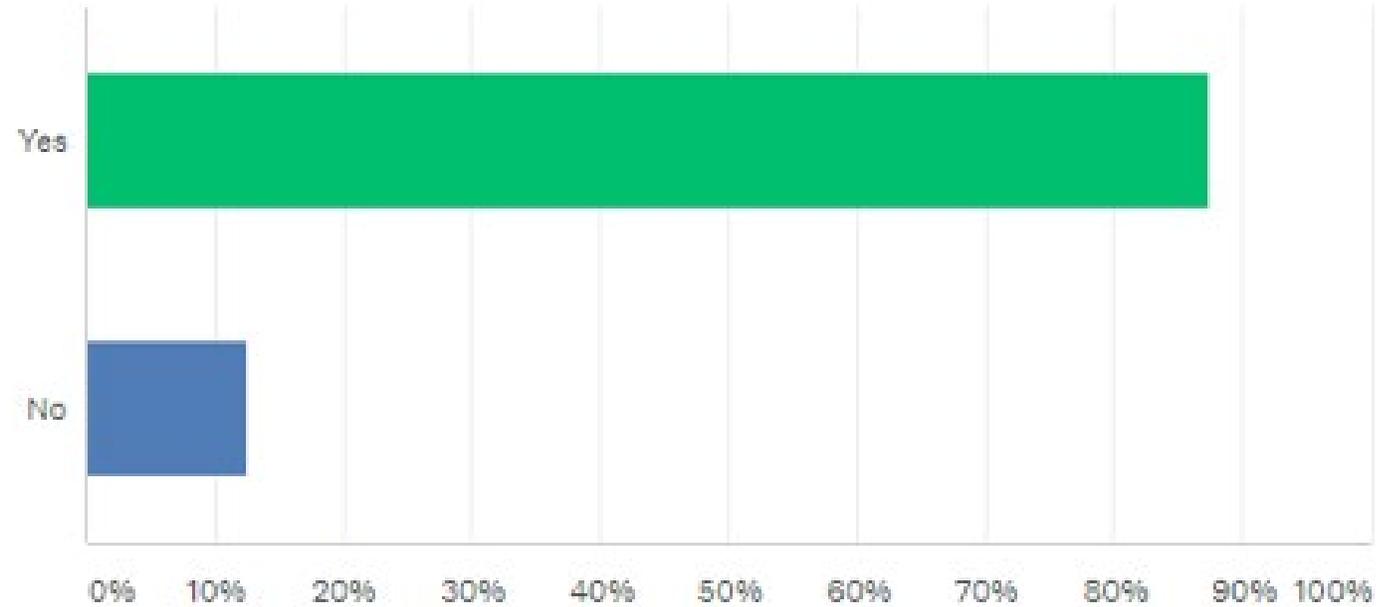


- 7 Question survey was sent out via AASHTO Committee on Transportation System Operations, Working Group on Freight Operations members at state DOTs in late October of 2020.
- 16 responses

1

# Did your state evaluate allowing food truck operations in rest areas following the FHWA Notice of Enforcement Discretion?

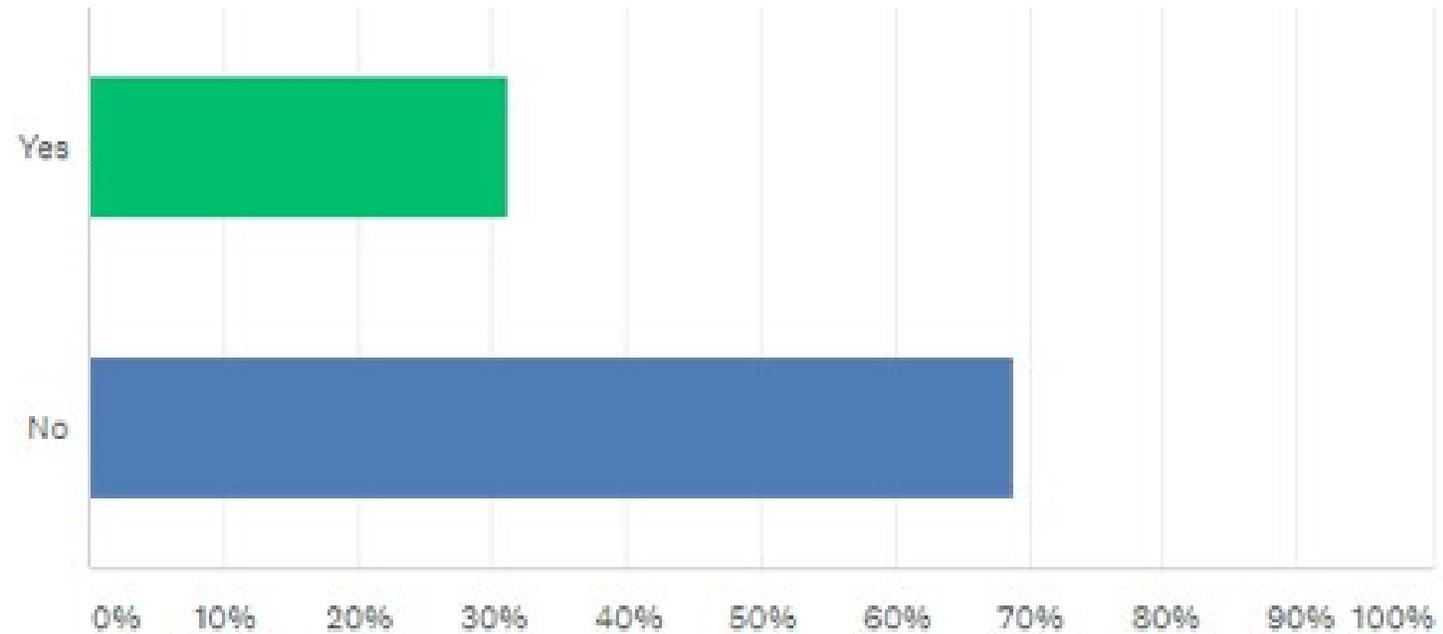
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	87.50% 14
No	12.50% 2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>

# Did you ultimately allow food trucks to operate in your rest areas?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	31.25%	5
No	68.75%	11
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>16</b>

# If you did allow food trucks to operate in your rest areas, when did you terminate the operation?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 13

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Date	Responses 100.00% 3

RESPONSES (3) TAGS (0)

Showing 3 responses

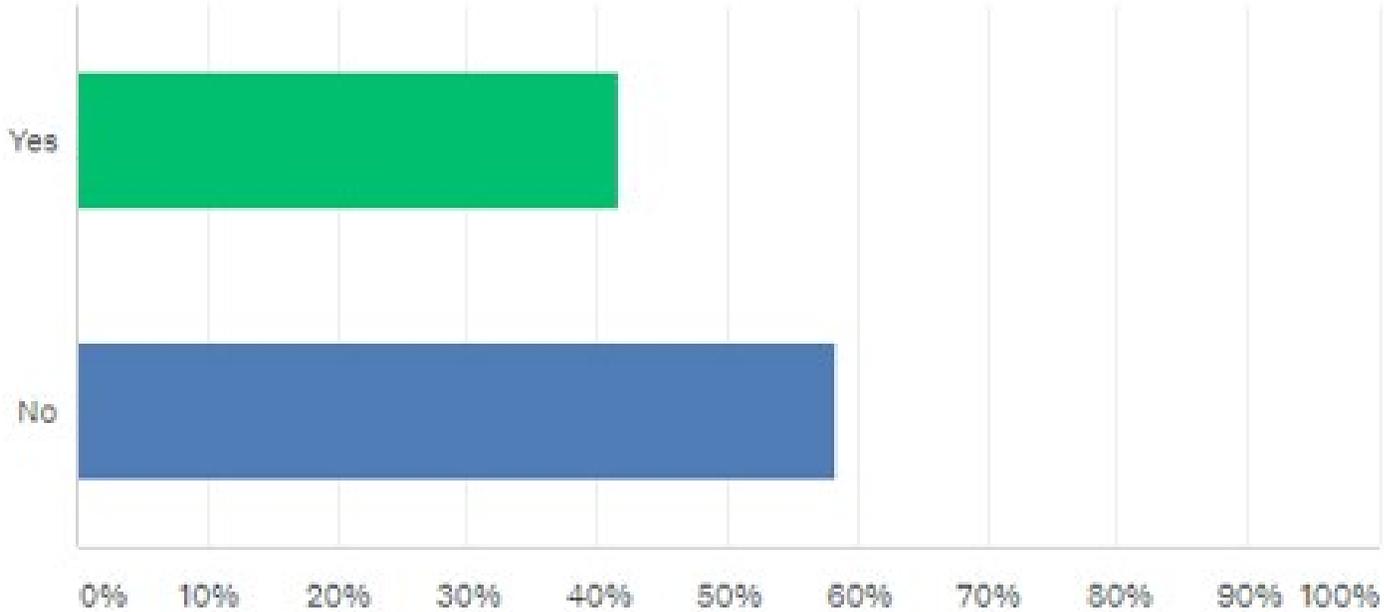
07/11/2020  
10/21/2020 2:57 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)

05/17/2020  
10/19/2020 4:49 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)

06/01/2020  
10/19/2020 1:12 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)

# Was there an approval process to authorize individual food trucks to operate?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	41.67% 5
No	58.33% 7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>

# What was the process, was there a fee to apply?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 7

Showing 9 responses

Single point of contact established with District offices issuing the necessary permit.  
10/21/2020 2:57 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

N/A  
10/20/2020 11:05 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

We are still issuing permits (that's why there's no date in #3). There is no fee for the permit. Vendors apply via specific application, I review the applications, verify they have insurance and issue the permit with instructions on how to reserve a location at a rest area. Then the vendor contacts our Rest Area Manager and he reserves the slot at the rest area for the vendor.  
10/19/2020 6:29 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

Yes. Food truck vendors had to submit an application and provide a certificate of liability listing MnDOT as an additional insurer.  
10/19/2020 4:49 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

## What was the process, was there a fee to apply?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 7

N/A

10/19/2020 1:12 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

n/a

10/19/2020 12:32 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

No

10/19/2020 12:27 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

Permit application. No fee.

10/15/2020 12:17 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

No fee, simple application, no limit on # of participants.

# Did you receive feedback from truckers on the availability of food trucks?

Answered: 10   Skipped: 6

Showing 10 responses

No

10/21/2020 2:57 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

---

Yes

10/20/2020 11:05 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

---

A few. They appreciate the ability to get a hot meal at the rest area where they can safely park. Most of the feedback has come from vendors and they have told some pretty cool stories about their positive interaction with some drivers.

10/19/2020 6:29 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

---

No.

10/19/2020 4:49 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

[Add tags](#) ▼

# Did you receive feedback from truckers on the availability of food trucks?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 6

Minimal feedback  
10/19/2020 3:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

no  
10/19/2020 1:12 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

No  
10/19/2020 12:32 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

No  
10/19/2020 12:27 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

Indirectly from other States.



**GET LOADED FT** @FtLoaded · Apr 12, 2020



Replying to [@ODOT\\_Statewide](#)

Is there a way to notify the truckers that there's a food truck at certain rest stops if we set up?



**Ohio Dept of Transportation**  @ODOT\_Statewide · Apr 12, 2020



Unfortunately, there is not. We don't want to turn the rest areas into a destination for people to leave their homes and visit. When truck drivers stop, they'll be able to see you.



# Were trucks notified of the presence of a food truck with enough time to exit the mainline into a rest area? If yes, how so?

Answered: 10   Skipped: 6

See #8  
10/21/2020 2:57 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

---

N/A  
10/20/2020 11:05 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

---

We did not authorize signage on the mainline. Knowledge was by blast to website (which has notifications sent to those that enroll their email) , twitter, instagram, facebook, word of mouth.  
10/19/2020 6:29 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

---

No.  
10/19/2020 4:49 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

---

# Were trucks notified of the presence of a food truck with enough time to exit the mainline into a rest area? If yes, how so?

Answered: 10   Skipped: 6

N/A  
10/19/2020 3:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

---

yes  
10/19/2020 1:12 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

---

n/a  
10/19/2020 12:32 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

---

No  
10/19/2020 12:27 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

Were trucks notified of the presence of a food truck with enough time to exit the mainline into a rest area? If yes, how so?

Answered: 10   Skipped: 6

N/A  
10/15/2020 12:17 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

No  
10/13/2020 11:01 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

## What advice do you have for future emergency declarations?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 7

Showing 9 responses

- 
- There was only one food truck that showed interest and held a meal giveaway on two occasions with MDOT assistance.
- 10/21/2020 2:57 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼
- 
- Truckers did not feel a need for food trucks.
- 10/20/2020 11:05 AM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼
- 
- Unsure what you're looking for here, Trying to keep up with declarations, timeframes etc is always a bit tricky when multiple agencies are involved. Communication on this one was pretty straight forward.
- 10/19/2020 6:29 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼
- 
- Better advertise the program and include signage on the mainline in advance of the rest areas that offered food truck vending.
- 10/19/2020 4:49 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼

## What advice do you have for future emergency declarations?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 7

- 
- Let industries know that some state laws may prohibit the activity.
- 10/19/2020 3:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼
- 
- None
- 10/19/2020 2:53 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼
- 
- The Department of Public Health has recommended against such a practice due to concerns about crowding during this pandemic and the potential for exposure to the public and rest area staff. There also are safety considerations, given the likelihood of increased pedestrian foot traffic and the like.
- 10/19/2020 12:32 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼
- 
- We did not get questions from industry on wanting food trucks in rest areas so we did not pursue it.
- 10/19/2020 12:27 PM [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#) ▼
-

# How was participation?

- Example: It is clear that not all of the 275 applicants in OH actually set up in a rest area. What is known is that by the time Ohio permitted the reopening of restaurants in mid-June only 2 food trucks were still set up in rest areas for that final week when they were permitted.
  - Ohio choose to end the program when restaurants were reopened mid-June.
- CA and CO extended their programs at least through July.

# Overview

- Depending upon the state, county or municipality, food could be more difficult to find (both prepared food and groceries).
- Other locations were not impacted to the same degree
- Some states were able to react quickly to the Notice
- Others hit snags
- Truckers largely had no advance notice of locations with food trucks



YOUR MESSAGE HERE

**Sing-a-long time** 

Signs Signs Everywhere Signs

70's version, or 90's version

No judgment

Maybe next time ?

# Future implications

- Areas hit hard by hurricanes, severe flooding, large scale wildfire that can lead to damaged food service facilities, lack of needed utilities to facilities?
- Same response in future would again require action such as the Notice of Enforcement Discretion by FHWA.

# Your input

- What did you learn?
- What did others learn that was not captured in the survey?

# Thank You

- Dan Haake



- AASHTO Committee on Transportation System Operations, Working Group on Freight Operations.



- Pat Zelinski
- Dave Huft



*Truck Specialized Parking Services*



*Scott Grenerth*

[sgrenerth@tsps.io](mailto:sgrenerth@tsps.io)

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