

Recent Greyhound bus crash underscores overnight truck parking crisis

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On July 12, 2023, a tragic accident occurred along Interstate 70 in Madison County at milepost 27 near Highland at the Silver Lake Rest Area entrance ramp. The incident occurred at approximately 1:54 a.m. according to Illinois State Police reports, involving a St. Louis-bound Greyhound passenger bus traveling west that crashed into three parked commercial motor vehicles.

More than a dozen Greyhound passengers were injured in the crash, with three fatalities.

The three lives lost: Bradley Donovan, 47, from Springfield, Ill.; Buford Paya, 71, from Supai, Ariz., and Juan Vasquez-Rodriguez, 34, from Passaic, N.J.

The Associated Press reported that no one in the three trucks was hurt in the crash, and that Illinois State Police spokesperson Melaney Arnold had indicated that those killed and injured were all on the bus. Representatives from the National Transportation Safety Board soon arrived on the scene to further investigate the incident.

It is illegal for semis to park on exit ramps, but as the Illinois Business Journal reported in May 2023, parking for trucks is at a critical shortage, and especially overnight.

Truckers are legally obligated to comply with ‘Hours of Service’ Regulations from the Federal Motor Carrier

Safety Administration. These regulations limit the amount of time that drivers can be behind the wheel and define mandatory hours of rest time off the road. Truckers are challenged when it comes time to park their semis and gear down to a stop during their haul.

Most evenings, the truck stops along the interstates fill up fast, with the rest areas quickly following suit. Truckers struggle to find places to park and comply as well with the federal law that prohibits them from moving on.

Todd Spencer, president of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), said, “When truck drivers don’t have a designated place to park, they end up parking on the side of the road, near exit ramps, or elsewhere. This isn’t safe for the driver and it’s not safe for others on the road.”

While this crash is still under investigation, it clearly demonstrates just how unsafe it is for everyone for truckers to park on the shoulder, yet it often ends up being the only course of action they can take once the hours behind the wheel are up and they have to find a place to gear down.

Spencer further pointed out that, while 70 percent of American freight is transported by truck, there is only one parking spot for every 11 trucks on the road.

Back on March 23, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg had also recognized the parking crisis for truckers during a congressional hearing. “When you talk with truck driv-

ers, it’s one of the first things that they’ll raise, and it’s not just a matter of convenience, it’s really a matter of safety,” said Buttigieg. “It means that, as a driver is on their route, they see that they’re getting close to the limit of their hours of service. They’re faced with a choice of either to stop short and lose income, if there’s even a space near them, or to park in a place that could be unsafe.”

U.S. Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.) was joined by U.S. Rep. Angie Craig (D-Minn.) and U.S. Senators Mark Kelly (D-Ariz.) and Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.) in introducing bipartisan, bicameral legislation with the Truck Parking Safety Improvement Act, designed to allocate U.S. Department of Transportation funding and create thousands of safe parking spots for trucks and make necessary improvements to existing truck parking areas.

In the days following the July 12 crash, Rep. Bost said, “It’s sad that another tragedy had to happen to bring light to the need for better, safer truck parking. The investigation into the cause of the Madison County accident is ongoing, but conditions that made the accident possible are already well known. Exhausted truckers are forced to push that extra mile just to find a place to stop for the night; often that means idling on highway shoulders and offramps. These dangerous conditions aren’t just a risk for truckers, but for every other commuter on the road as well.

“That’s why I introduced the Truck Parking Safety Improvement Act to

direct existing federal funding to rehabbing or constructing rest areas and truck parking. As someone who grew up in a family trucking business, I’ve been working to educate my House colleagues on the importance of this issue and will continue to do so until we affect meaningful change,” Rep. Bost added.

The Truck Parking Safety Improvement Act today is co-sponsored by 37 members of Congress. In addition, it is supported by the OOIDA, the American Trucking Associations (ATA), the Truckload Carriers Association, ATA Law Enforcement Advisory Board, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, ATA Women in Motion Advisory Board, SHIPPERS Coalition, National Association of Small Trucking Companies, and Consumer Brands Association.

The proposed Act, however, has not yet become law.

“This is not a partisan issue,” said ATA President Chris Spear during his testimony at “The State of Transportation Infrastructure and Supply Chain Challenges” hearing held earlier this year. “Anybody can drive out of the beltway here and see trucks resting at on- and off-ramps. Why? Because they are required by federal law to take breaks. When those breaks come up and they don’t have a place to park, they’re going to look for the next best thing. This is a safety issue – not just for drivers... It’s also a safety issue for the motoring public. Getting them safe, secure, well-lit parking is a no-brainer.”

State Senator Harriss opens Edwardsville office



Illinois Senator Erica Harriss and her staff celebrated the official opening of her Edwardsville office with other local community members, supporters and other elected officials that joined her to mark the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Sen. Harriss is at the center of the photo holding the scissors. State Rep. Amy Elik (R-Alton) is at the far right in the photo and just to the left of First Community Credit Union’s Laura Mattson who is holding one end of the green ribbon. (Melissa Crockett Meske/Illinois Business Journal)



State Senator Erica Harriss (R-Glen Carbon) celebrated the official opening of her Edwardsville office with an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony on July 18. The office is located 120 N. Main St., Suite 1B, in the heart of downtown Edwardsville. Illinois State Senator Harriss and her staff will meet with constituents and provide services for the state’s 56th District from this new local location. To learn more, call (618) 307-5789 or visit online at www.SenatorEricaHarriss.com. (Melissa Crockett Meske/Illinois Business Journal)



From left, First Mid Bank & Trust’s Eric Gibson, State Senator Erica Harriss, and First Mid Bank & Trust’s Joshua Schuette enjoy a conversation during Harriss’s July 18 event to mark the official opening of her office in downtown Edwardsville at 120 N. Main St., Suite 1B. (Melissa Crockett Meske/Illinois Business Journal)