

Mary Ann Lovelady
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Hon. Chairman Corona and members of the Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security,

Good Morning. My name is Mary Ann Lovelady. I am the Tax Assessor Collector for Jones County. I would like to address you this morning on behalf of our smaller counties. I believe that the office of the county Tax Assessor-Collector has the highest amount of regular contact with people in our counties. At some point in the next 18 months, we'll have registered multiple vehicles, handled replacements, walked through the documents and forms they need to buy or sell a vehicle and possibly gone out to their vehicle to affix their windshield sticker and new plates.

What is the most common question? "How much will this cost?" I think this is a pretty universal question in counties of all sizes. We hear from people moving to Texas for the first time from all over the world. Often we mail out a package of information and forms that detail what the customer needs to bring in with them to title and register their vehicles.

I look forward to the simplified weight based registration fees that were included in the 81st regular session, in HB 2553, which will start Sept. 1st 2011, but these changes do present new problems. When the new weight based registration fees go into effect next year, we will be less able to help these people, unless we have a method to determine the needed information. Most other states do not include a vehicle weight on the title documents. We will need to be able to determine the correct weight and registration class for their vehicle, most likely by using some type of VIN assistant software. Where will this come from?

We also have many small businesses that use a pickup truck and trailer in their operations. Occasionally these people have been ticketed for not having enough added registration, or their license did not allow them to operate without a commercial license. This usually involves a difference of gross weight calculated by GVWR stickers, not empty weight plus carrying capacity. What weight should we collect the fees for?

We spend a lot of time and money in getting the correct forms to people. We work on their title documents, bundle all of that paper up and mail it to Austin for Title Control to review and process. There has not been a change in the County portion of the title fee in many years. I ask that you consider collection of a small fee to offset the rising mail expenses we face.

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- 1 County Tax Assessors must have a method of obtaining a useable weight for all vehicles that is consistent. This method should be available in at least two sources, both as an embedded component of the RTS system and also as either an online resource or a software application.
- 2 There must be a method available to the general public to obtain this information.
- 3 We need a small fee to cover the rising costs of mailing our title documents into Title Control and other related mailing.
- 4 It must be made clear if the registration fees for a new vehicles weight are to be determined by the shipping weight. SUV's continue to be a problem because we have an option to register as either passenger or "passenger-truck". One method adds an extra 1000 to 2000 pounds; the other simply shows it has a tonnage.
- 5 Should the Gross Vehicle Weight ever be used in determining the weight of a vehicle? We don't, but some agencies use this weight in calculating total combined gross weight. This is a discrepancy that needs to be clearly defined.
- 6 Will being included in a "Commercial Fleet" cause a vehicle to be determined to be a Commercial Motor Vehicle, or only those over 10,000 lbs.?
- 7 The Texas Transportation Code is used by many agencies to license and regulate vehicles and their drivers. The term "Commercial Motor Vehicle" has become almost excessive in use, and each chapter of the code uses a different definition. A notice is printed on the back of vehicle registration receipt that refers to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, which also has a definition in FMCSA Section 383.5 of a CMV. I submit to you that this needs immediate attention to create a simple definition that is used in common among all agencies and the entire Transportation Code. As the new registration fees are weight based, it seems logical and simple to use a single weight as the trigger to be a "Commercial Motor Vehicle". As Texas states (on the back of our registration receipt)that it has "adopted and enforces the FMCSA regulations", should we not have a common definition?

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Commercial Motor Vehicle and related definitions and references in the Texas Transportation Code and "blended" definitions.

Sec. 502.001 (2) Definitions, Commercial Motor Vehicle

Sec 502.001 (1-a) Definitions, Commercial Fleet

Sec. 502.001 (9) Definitions, Light Truck

Sec. 502.001 (17) Definitions, Passenger car

Sec. 502.162 (a, b, c) Vehicles that weigh More than 6,000 pounds gross weight

Sec. 541.201 (7) Definitions, Light Truck

Sec. 541.201 (12) Definitions, Passenger car

Sec. 548.001 (1) (A,B,C) Definitions, Commercial Motor Vehicle

Sec. 548.201 (a, b) Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspection Program