State of California
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Division of Traffic Operations, Mail Station 36
Transportation Permits Branch

Caltrans Proposal Response

Subject: Variance Revision
Proposal Date: November 12, 2003 (Revised 2006)
Date: February 2, 2010
Reference: CTPAC WG4-111203-001

Industry Proposed Revision:

Currently, for variance loads traveling on YELLOW routes with widths greater than 16 feet, the loads will be escorted by the California Highway Patrol (CHP). This proposal would revise the escort requirement load width, from 16 feet to 17 feet. When load widths are from 16 feet to 17 feet, the load would be escorted by pilot cars, and when load widths exceed 17 feet, the load would be escorted by the CHP.

The Department's Response:

This proposal was discussed within the Variance work group several times in the last three years. It was determined that Caltrans could not waive or increase the widths of oversize loads requiring CHP escort. The paragraphs below summarize the work group discussions in prior meetings.

Escort by the CHP is required for loads greater than 16 feet wide on YELLOW routes. A load over 16 feet wide being transported on a 12 foot wide lane would encroach into adjacent lanes and shoulders. Turning movements by vehicles when traversing curves, intersections, and ramps would further encroach into the adjoining or adjacent lane or shoulder area. The presence of signal arms, signs, overhead lines may exist, which could necessitate a lane change. In these situations, the CHP officers are present to control highway traffic for maneuverings.

One of the primary concerns with this proposal is the ability of a legal vehicle, such as emergency response vehicle, to travel safely in the adjacent lane. Permitting loads that exceed 16 feet wide without escort on YELLOW routes would decrease safety for the traveling motorists. As a result, the Department will maintain its current requirement of having an escort when the width of the load exceeds 16 feet on a YELLOW route.