

LEGISLATIVE BILL 561

Approved by the Governor May 15, 2025

Introduced by Brandt, 32; Murman, 38; DeKay, 40; Dover, 19; Meyer, 17.

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Nebraska Rules of the Road; to amend section 60-6,298, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and sections 60-601 and 60-6,290, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to provide for the issuance and revocation of permits for overweight raw-milk vehicles; to state legislative findings; to define terms; to require the Department of Transportation to create and publish a bridge map; to provide for liability for damage to bridge structures as prescribed; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections; and to declare an emergency.
Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 60-601, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024, is amended to read:

60-601 Sections 60-601 to 60-6,383 and section 4 of this act shall be known and may be cited as the Nebraska Rules of the Road.

Sec. 2. Section 60-6,290, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024, is amended to read:

60-6,290 (1)(a) No vehicle shall exceed a length of forty feet, extreme overall dimensions, inclusive of front and rear bumpers including load, except that:

(i) A bus or a motor home, as defined in section 71-4603, may exceed the forty-foot limitation but shall not exceed a length of forty-five feet;

(ii) A truck-tractor may exceed the forty-foot limitation;

(iii) A semitrailer operating in a truck-tractor single semitrailer combination, which semitrailer was actually and lawfully operating in the State of Nebraska on December 1, 1982, may exceed the forty-foot limitation;

(iv) A semitrailer operating in a truck-tractor single semitrailer combination, which semitrailer was not actually and lawfully operating in the State of Nebraska on December 1, 1982, may exceed the forty-foot limitation but shall not exceed a length of fifty-three feet including load;

(v) A semitrailer operating in a truck-tractor single semitrailer combination, while transporting baled livestock forage, may exceed the forty-foot limitation but shall not exceed a length of fifty-nine feet six inches including load;

(vi) An articulated bus vehicle operated by a transit authority established under the Transit Authority Law or regional metropolitan transit authority established pursuant to section 18-804 may exceed the forty-foot limitation. For purposes of this subdivision (vi), an articulated bus vehicle shall not exceed sixty-five feet in length; and

(vii) A truck may exceed the forty-foot limitation but shall not exceed a length of forty-five feet.

(b) No combination of vehicles shall exceed a length of sixty-five feet, extreme overall dimensions, inclusive of front and rear bumpers and including load, except:

(i) One truck and one trailer, loaded or unloaded, used in transporting implements of husbandry to be engaged in harvesting, while being transported into or through the state during daylight hours if the total length does not exceed seventy-five feet including load;

(ii) A truck-tractor single semitrailer combination;

(iii) A truck-tractor semitrailer trailer combination, but the semitrailer trailer portion of such combination shall not exceed sixty-five feet inclusive of connective devices;

(iv) A driveaway saddlemount vehicle transporter combination and driveaway saddlemount with fullmount vehicle transporter combination, but the total overall length shall not exceed ninety-seven feet;

(v) A stinger-steered automobile transporter, but the total overall length shall not exceed eighty feet, inclusive of a front overhang of less than four feet and a rear overhang of less than six feet. For purposes of this subdivision, automobile transporter means any vehicle combination designed and used for the transport of assembled highway vehicles, including truck camper units. An automobile transporter shall not be prohibited from the transport of cargo or general freight on a backhaul, so long as it is in compliance with weight limitations for a truck-tractor and semitrailer combination; and

(vi) A towaway trailer transporter combination, but the total overall length shall not exceed eighty-two feet. For purposes of this subdivision, towaway trailer transporter combination means a combination of vehicles consisting of a trailer transporter towing unit and two trailers or semitrailers with a total weight that does not exceed twenty-six thousand pounds, and in which the trailers or semitrailers carry no property and constitute inventory property of a manufacturer, distributor, or dealer of such trailers or semitrailers.

(c) A truck shall be construed to be one vehicle for the purpose of determining length.

(d) A trailer shall be construed to be one vehicle for the purpose of

determining length.

(2) Subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to:

(a) Extra-long vehicles which have been issued a permit pursuant to section 60-6,292;

(b) Vehicles which have been issued a permit pursuant to section 60-6,299;

(c) The temporary moving of farm machinery during daylight hours in the normal course of farm operations;

(d) The movement of unbaled livestock forage vehicles, loaded or unloaded;

(e) The movement of public utility or other construction and maintenance material and equipment at any time;

(f) Farm equipment dealers or their representatives as authorized under section 60-6,382 driving, delivering, or picking up farm equipment or implements of husbandry within the county in which the dealer maintains his or her place of business, or in any adjoining county or counties, and return;

(g) The overhang of any motor vehicle being hauled upon any lawful combination of vehicles, but such overhang shall not exceed the distance from the rear axle of the hauled motor vehicle to the closest bumper thereof;

(h) The overhang of a combine to be engaged in harvesting, while being transported into or through the state driven during daylight hours by a truck-tractor semitrailer combination, but the length of the semitrailer, including overhang, shall not exceed sixty-three feet and the maximum semitrailer length shall not exceed fifty-three feet;

(i) Any self-propelled specialized mobile equipment with a fixed load when the requirements of subdivision (2)(i) of section 60-6,288 are met; ~~or~~

(j) One truck-tractor two trailer combination or one truck-tractor semitrailer trailer combination used in transporting equipment utilized by custom harvesters under contract to agricultural producers to harvest wheat, soybeans, or milo during the months of April through November but the length of the property-carrying units, excluding load, shall not exceed eighty-one feet six inches; ~~or -~~

(k) An overweight raw-milk vehicle for which a length exception has been granted under section 4 of this act.

(3) The length limitations of this section shall be exclusive of safety and energy conservation devices such as rearview mirrors, turnsignal lights, marker lights, steps and handholds for entry and egress, flexible fender extensions, mudflaps and splash and spray suppressant devices, load-induced tire bulge, refrigeration units or air compressors, and other devices necessary for safe and efficient operation of commercial motor vehicles, except that no device excluded from the limitations of this section shall have by its design or use the capability to carry cargo.

Sec. 3. Section 60-6,298, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

60-6,298 (1)(a) The Department of Transportation or the Nebraska State Patrol, with respect to highways under its jurisdiction including the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, and local authorities, with respect to highways under their jurisdiction, may in their discretion upon application and good cause being shown therefor issue a special, continuing, or continuous permit in writing authorizing the applicant or his or her designee:

(i) To operate or move a vehicle, a combination of vehicles, or objects of a size or weight of vehicle or load exceeding the maximum specified by law when such permit is necessary:

(A) To further the national defense or the general welfare;

(B) To permit movement of cost-saving equipment to be used in highway or other public construction or in agricultural land treatment; or

(C) Because of an emergency, an unusual circumstance, or a very special situation;

(ii) To operate vehicles, for a distance up to one hundred twenty miles, loaded up to fifteen percent greater than the maximum weight specified by law, or up to ten percent greater than the maximum length specified by law, or both, except that any combination with two or more cargo-carrying units, not including the truck-tractor, also known as a longer combination vehicle, may only operate for a distance up to seventy miles loaded up to fifteen percent greater than the maximum weight specified by law, or up to ten percent greater than the maximum length specified by law, or both, when carrying grain or other seasonally harvested products from the field where such grain or products are harvested to storage, market, or stockpile in the field or from stockpile or farm storage to market or factory when failure to move such grain or products in abundant quantities would cause an economic loss to the person or persons whose grain or products are being transported or when failure to move such grain or products in as large quantities as possible would not be in the best interests of the national defense or general welfare. The distance limitation may be waived for vehicles when carrying dry beans or dry peas and lentils from the field where harvested to storage or market when dry beans or dry peas and lentils are not normally stored, purchased, or used within the permittee's local area and must be transported more than one hundred twenty miles to an available marketing or storage destination. No permit shall authorize a weight greater than twenty thousand pounds on any single axle;

(iii) To transport an implement of husbandry which does not exceed twelve and one-half feet in width during daylight hours, except that the permit shall not allow transport on holidays;

(iv) To operate one or more recreational vehicles, as defined in section 71-4603, exceeding the maximum width specified by law if movement of the recreational vehicles is prior to retail sale and the recreational vehicles

comply with subdivision (2)(k) of section 60-6,288;

(v) To operate an emergency vehicle for purposes of sale, demonstration, exhibit, or delivery, if the applicant or his or her designee is a manufacturer or sales agent of the emergency vehicle. No permit shall be issued for an emergency vehicle which weighs over sixty thousand pounds on the tandem axle; or

(vi) To transport during daylight hours divisible loads of livestock forage in bale form which do not exceed twelve feet in width, except that the permit shall not allow transport on holidays; or -

(vii) To operate overweight raw-milk vehicles carrying raw milk from a dairy farm to a processing facility for such raw milk in accordance with section 4 of this act.

(b) No permit shall be issued under subdivision (a)(i) of this subsection for a vehicle carrying a load unless such vehicle is loaded with an object which exceeds the size or weight limitations, which cannot be dismantled or reduced in size or weight without great difficulty, and which of necessity must be moved over the highways to reach its intended destination. No permit shall be required for the temporary movement on highways other than dustless-surfaced state highways and for necessary access to points on such highways during daylight hours of cost-saving equipment to be used in highway or other public construction or in agricultural land treatment when such temporary movement is necessary and for a reasonable distance.

(2) The application for any such permit shall specifically describe the vehicle, the load to be operated or moved, whenever possible the particular highways for which permit to operate is requested, and whether such permit is requested for a single trip or for continuous or continuing operation. The permit shall include a signed affirmation under oath that, for any load sixteen feet high or higher, the applicant has contacted any and all electric utilities that have high voltage conductors and infrastructure that cross over the roadway affected by the move and made arrangements with such electric utilities for the safe movement of the load under any high voltage conductors owned by such electric utilities.

(3) The department or local authority is authorized to issue or withhold such permit at its discretion or, if such permit is issued, to limit the number of days during which the permit is valid, to limit the number of trips, to establish seasonal or other time limitations within which the vehicles described may be operated on the highways indicated, or to issue a continuous or continuing permit for use on all highways, including the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. The permits are subject to reasonable conditions as to periodic renewal of such permit and as to operation or movement of such vehicles. The department or local authority may otherwise limit or prescribe conditions of operation of such vehicle or vehicles, when necessary to assure against undue damage to the road foundations, surfaces, or structures or undue danger to the public safety. The department or local authority may require such undertaking or other security as may be deemed necessary to compensate for any injury to any roadway or road structure.

(4) Every such permit shall be carried in the vehicle to which it refers and shall be open to inspection by any peace officer, carrier enforcement officer, or authorized agent of any authority granting such permit. Each such permit shall state the maximum weight permissible on a single axle or combination of axles and the total gross weight allowed. No person shall violate any of the terms or conditions of such special permit. In case of any violation, the permit shall be deemed automatically revoked and the penalty of the original limitations shall be applied unless:

(a) The violation consists solely of exceeding the size or weight specified by the permit, in which case only the penalty of the original size or weight limitation exceeded shall be applied; or

(b) The total gross load is within the maximum authorized by the permit, no axle is more than ten percent in excess of the maximum load for such axle or group of axles authorized by the permit, and such load can be shifted to meet the weight limitations of wheel and axle loads authorized by such permit. Such shift may be made without penalty if it is made at the state or commercial scale designated in the permit. The vehicle may travel from its point of origin to such designated scale without penalty, and a scale ticket from such scale, showing the vehicle to be properly loaded and within the gross and axle weights authorized by the permit, shall be reasonable evidence of compliance with the terms of the permit; or -

(c) Such permit is an overweight raw-milk vehicle permit and the overweight raw-milk vehicle violated subsection (3) of section 4 of this act.

(5) The department or local authority issuing a permit as provided in this section may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations with respect to the issuance of permits provided for in this section.

(6) The department shall make available applications for permits authorized pursuant to subdivisions (1)(a)(ii) and (1)(a)(iii) of this section in the office of each county treasurer. The department may make available applications for all other permits authorized by this section to the office of the county treasurer and may make available applications for all permits authorized by this section to any other location chosen by the department.

(7) The department or local authority issuing a permit may require a permit fee of not to exceed twenty-five dollars, except that:

(a) The fee for a continuous or continuing permit may not exceed twenty-five dollars for a ninety-day period, fifty dollars for a one-hundred-eighty-day period, or one hundred dollars for a one-year period; and

(b) The fee for permits issued pursuant to subdivision (1)(a)(ii) of this section shall be twenty-five dollars. Permits issued pursuant to such subdivision shall be valid for thirty days and shall be renewable four times for a total number of days not to exceed one hundred fifty days per calendar year.

A vehicle or combination of vehicles for which an application for a permit is requested pursuant to this section shall be registered under section 60-3,147 or 60-3,198 for the maximum gross vehicle weight that is permitted pursuant to section 60-6,294 before a permit shall be issued.

Sec. 4. (1) The Legislature finds that:

(a) Raw milk needs to be promptly processed;

(b) Lawful truck weight requirements can lead to an inability to haul all available raw milk produced at a dairy farm, which results in some raw milk being wasted;

(c) There has been a reduction in the availability of raw milk processing facilities in this state; and

(d) The opportunity and need for overweight raw-milk vehicle permits to operate overweight raw-milk vehicles to carry only raw milk from a dairy farm to a milk processing facility for such raw milk is needed due to 23 U.S.C. 127(a)(13), as such section existed on January 1, 2025, concerning the carrying of fluid milk products.

(2) For purposes of this section:

(a) Bridge map means the map described in subsection (4) of this section;

(b) Department means the Department of Transportation;

(c) Overweight raw-milk vehicle means a vehicle that has been issued and currently holds an overweight raw-milk vehicle permit;

(d) Overweight raw-milk vehicle permit means a valid special, continuing, or continuous overweight raw-milk vehicle permit issued under section 60-6,298 to carry raw milk from a dairy farm to a processing facility for such raw milk; and

(e) Prohibited bridge structure means a bridge structure identified as prohibited on the bridge map.

(3) An overweight raw-milk vehicle shall:

(a) Not exceed a gross weight of one hundred seven thousand five hundred pounds;

(b) For each single axle and each group of axles on the truck-tractor and the hauling tanker trailer, not exceed the weight limits calculated using the federal bridge formula identified in 23 U.S.C. 127, as such section existed on January 1, 2025;

(c) Carry a physical or digital copy of the bridge map;

(d) Not enter any prohibited bridge structure; and

(e) Not travel on the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, unless authorized by the department on the overweight raw-milk vehicle permit pursuant to written approval from the Federal Highway Administration for such authorization.

(4)(a) Prior to January 1, 2026, the department shall create a map of bridge structures in this state onto which an overweight raw-milk vehicle shall not enter.

(b) The department shall review the bridge map at least once each year and make any necessary updates to the bridge map.

(c) The department shall publish the most recent version of the bridge map on the public website provided by the department.

(5)(a) The department may revoke the overweight raw-milk vehicle permit for any overweight raw-milk vehicle that violates subsection (3) of this section.

(b) Any such revocation shall not become effective until the holder of any such revoked permit has been provided written notice by the department of such revocation. Any such notice provided by United States mail is not effective until received by the holder of the revoked permit.

(c) Any such revocation may be appealed by the holder of the revoked permit. The appeal shall be in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

(6) If the department determines that overweight raw-milk vehicle permits put this state at risk of losing federal aid funding, the department shall revoke all such permits.

(7) For any overweight raw-milk vehicle that enters a prohibited bridge structure and is the proximate cause of damage to the prohibited bridge structure, the owner of the overweight raw-milk vehicle shall be liable for all costs associated with repairing such damage. The department may bring an action to recover such costs associated with repairing such damage in the district court of the county where the prohibited bridge structure is located or in the district court of Lancaster County. Any money recovered in such action shall be remitted to the State Treasurer for credit to the Roads Operations Cash Fund.

(8) The department may grant an exception to section 60-6,290 regarding the length of a vehicle if such length is reasonable and is needed for an overweight raw-milk vehicle to comply with all weight limits for single axles and groups of axles.

Sec. 5. Original section 60-6,298, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and sections 60-601 and 60-6,290, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024, are repealed.

Sec. 6. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.