

WHY A LACK OF TRUCK PARKING IS EVERYONE'S PROBLEM

- New federal funding to improve highway safety shows an increased awareness of the longstanding nationwide truck parking shortage. But Evan Shelley, CEO of Truck Parking Club, explains why more needs to be done to solve the problem.
- The truck parking crisis still largely lacks mainstream visibility, and media coverage can shift the public perception.
- Technology like location-sharing apps can help with certain aspects like poor parking space visibility. The private sector and investors are getting more involved in safe parking innovation.

New legislation could increase nationwide truck parking — a long overdue measure to improve highway safety and address one of the most critical American supply chain issues. The Safer Highways and Increased Performance for Interstate Trucking (SHIP IT) Act would dedicate approximately \$800 million for commercial vehicle parking projects through 2026.

But the trucking community knows there's another side to this issue. While the SHIP IT Act is a step in the right direction, the issue of truck parking shortages lacks mainstream awareness and media advocacy. If nobody talks about it, the problem won't go away.

Evan Shelley, co-founder and CEO of Truck Parking Club, said, "I wasn't aware until the last three or four years. It had never even hit my radar that there was some type of issue going on, and I've been in real estate a long time."

On an extended cut of the RoadSigns Podcast episode 106, TT's Seth Clevenger spoke with Shelley to learn more about the truck parking shortage and what needs to happen to solve the problem.

Understanding the truck parking shortage

According to a recent Federal Highway Administration survey, truck parking is the number one issue for drivers. How serious is the problem? More than 3.5 million professional drivers move America's freight, but there are only about 300,000 designated truck parking spots. That amounts to one spot for every 11 drivers.

A lack of infrastructure is not the only reason for the crisis. Drivers cite contributing factors like federal hours of service (HOS) regulations, warehouse delays, and tight delivery timeframes. If a warehouse takes three hours longer than expected to load the truck but the driver still needs to make an interstate delivery without exceeding his HOS limits, he doesn't have time to drive an hour out of the way to find an available truck stop.

Compounding the issue are legislative pushes to keep tractor-trailers out of residential areas. New York City is booting and towing illegally parked trucks, Delaware increased fines for residential parking, and Minneapolis prohibits truck parking on city streets. Whether it's a concern about obstructing signage, blocking driveways, noise, emissions, or crowding the roadways, communities across the nation don't want commercial vehicles in their backyards.

"Nobody wants a tractor-trailer parked in their neighborhood," said Shelley, "but [we can] do something rather than being disparaging to a very important career."

With limited parking options, many drivers are forced to pull off on the highway shoulder. Not only is the driver's personal safety at greater risk, but highway collisions are more likely. Every truck on the side of the road represents an increased likelihood of injury, property damage, and financial liability for the shipping company.

To solve truck parking, awareness is key

The issue simply isn't apparent to most people outside the trucking industry. While neighborhood residents might support safety measures for residential streets, they likely haven't considered how truckers are affected when parking is a challenge.

Although the transportation media covers the issue and highlights solutions, other media outlets — and even politicians — often take shots at truck drivers without any empathy or suggestions.

"They just go after truckers and truck parking owners," said Shelley. "It's kind of bizarre. I think they're not in the industry enough to know."

Increased awareness of the issue is the first step. According to Shelley, when media outlets focus on the logistical challenges of truck parking, without casting drivers in a negative light, more businesses will take up the mantle of solving the parking problem.

Technology can help

Beyond the lack of public support, poor parking space visibility compounds the problem. If a driver sees four trucks along the side of the road, she might assume there are no spots left at the rest stop. While many highway stops have road signs alerting drivers to how many spaces are available, the data may not update in real time. Location-sharing apps can provide safe alternatives.

The Lytx Parked-Highway/Ramp feature, for instance, uses an event recorder to identify when a truck has been parked alongside a highway shoulder for more than 10 minutes. The Lytx app then notifies the fleet manager, who can locate safe parking spots in the area and send the information to the driver.

Shelley's platform, TruckParkingClub.com, enables truckers to reserve parking spaces online days in advance. The space-sharing app also gives landowners the option to monetize vacant lots, creating new parking spaces without building new infrastructure.

In some ways, these solutions are simple — convert unused areas into parking and tell truckers how to get there. But many investors miss these opportunities because they're looking too far into the future.

Silicon Valley discovers truck parking

At this year’s Manifest, the logistics and supply chain conference held in Las Vegas, the future was on display. Some 4,500 attendees representing more than 50 countries attended sessions on autonomous driving and sustainability. Yet as exciting as a self-driving truck seems, we’re years — perhaps decades — away from implementing the technology at scale.

Truck parking is something we can solve now.

In 2022, truck parking projects received federal Infrastructure for Rebuilding America grants for the first time. As more venture capitalists and angel investors take notice of the problem, the private sector has become more involved in safe parking innovations. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation even asked high school students to propose truck parking solutions in its annual Innovations Challenge contest.

As investors and automotive companies focus on future electrification and clean energy projects, the more immediate logistics concerns have to stay front and center.

“[Investors] are dipping their toes,” said Shelley. “They’re seeing what’s going on.”

Ultimately, more parking is a win-win for residential neighborhoods and truck fleets. Combating the shortage means fewer tractor-trailers on city streets and fewer drivers left in danger.

This article is based on an episode of Roadsigns, a podcast exploring the trends and technologies that are shaping the future of trucking. [Check out the website to catch past and future episodes.](#)