
Office of Legislative Auditor

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Audit Control # 40090014

Informational Report: Potential Duplication With Commercial Vehicle Inspections

October 2009

About This Informational Report

Louisiana Revised Statute 24:522(C) requires the Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) to evaluate programs and services of state government agencies and identify areas needing improvement. In the last regular session, the legislature formed the Commission on Streamlining Government (Commission), and LLA has been assigned to assist the Commission. One of the topics the Commission is focusing on is duplication of services provided by two or more programs.

To assist the Commission, we will report on areas of potential duplication by two or more agencies in delivering services. We defined duplication as identical or similar activities performed by more than one agency leading to accomplishment of the same or similar goals. We will issue individual reports addressing different areas of duplication.

To be responsive in a timely manner, we obtained information from state law, budget documents, agency interviews, and other sources. We did not conduct an audit in accordance with all government auditing standards. Though we performed procedures adequate to identify potential duplication, we did not perform sufficient procedures to make definitive conclusions or estimate potential savings, if any, that may result from any action taken by these entities to eliminate such potential duplication.

We identified two state agencies that are responsible for the weighing and inspection of commercial vehicles. These agencies are the Department of Public Safety (DPS), Office of State Police (OSP), Weights and Standards Mobile Police Force and the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), Weights and Standards Unit.

Potential Duplication Between OSP and DOTD

Potential duplication exists because both agencies are performing enforcement responsibilities involving federal and state established size and weight restrictions for commercial vehicles. DOTD weighs commercial vehicles at weigh stations, and OSP can weigh the same vehicle again at a roadside inspection. DOTD and OSP together had \$6,877,504 of expenditures and 124 employees in fiscal year 2009 to carry out these enforcement responsibilities.

OSP

OSP performs roadside inspections of commercial vehicles using portable scales to ensure that the vehicles are in compliance with established federal and state weight standards. OSP informed us that roadside inspections are an effective enforcement tool for commercial vehicles that bypass DOTD-maintained weigh stations. OSP performs roadside inspections to ensure that roadways are safe from vehicles that have an improper weight load. In addition to performing a roadside weight inspection on a commercial vehicle, OSP officers can also perform a safety inspection on the vehicle.

OSP's Weights and Standards Mobile Police Force's expenditures for fiscal year 2009 were \$1,702,828. The expenditures were funded by state general funds.

OSP has 27 POST-certified DPS police officers on staff to perform roadside inspections and weighed approximately 21,000 vehicles during fiscal year 2009. In addition, OSP's Weights and Standards Mobile Police Force performed approximately 12,000 safety inspections that resulted in approximately 3,600 vehicles being taken out of service.

DOTD

DOTD is responsible for enforcing size and weight restrictions on commercial vehicles as well. According to an official, DOTD weighs commercial vehicles at weigh stations to ensure that vehicles are in compliance with established federal and state weight standards to preserve valuable state infrastructure. DOTD operates 19 weigh stations located across the state. During calendar year 2008, DOTD weighed 4,669,342 commercial vehicles.

Commercial vehicles are weighed automatically by weigh-in-motion (WIM) scales. WIM scales are monitored by DOTD officers at weigh stations. The WIM scales weigh a vehicle to verify whether the vehicle's weight and standards fall within pre-established parameters for a commercial vehicle. When the WIM sensors detect a possible weight and standard violation, the WIM system notifies a driver to pull into a weigh station. DOTD officials then use a weigh station's static scales to weigh the vehicle. DOTD officials also use the WIM system to perform random weight screening of commercial vehicles.

DOTD does not perform roadside weighing with portable scales. Thus, if a vehicle avoids or by-passes a weigh station and is stopped on the roadside by a DOTD official, the official will have the vehicle return to the weigh station for inspection. According to a DOTD official, DOTD performs perimeter by-pass patrols within a 10-15 mile radius around a weigh station.

DOTD's Weights and Standards Unit has a staff of 97 employees. Eighty-four of the staff are uniformed officers, who perform enforcement duties. Like the OSP, DOTD imposes fines on violators when a vehicle is over its stipulated weight limit. DOTD, Weights and Standards Unit's expenditures for fiscal year 2009 were \$5,174,676. Self-generated revenue (collection of fines) and the state's Transportation Trust Fund are the funding sources for this activity.

FOR QUESTIONS RELATED TO THIS INFORMATIONAL REPORT,
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A copy of this report is available at our Web site www.la.gov.

Under the provisions of state law, this report is a public document. A copy of this report has been submitted to the Governor, to the Attorney General, and to other public officials as required by state law. A copy of this report has been made available for public inspection at the Baton Rouge office of the Legislative Auditor.

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