



December 20, 2024

To the Department of Environmental Quality:

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Tow Truck Association, whose members include not only towing businesses that range from AAA-sponsored roadside assistance to heavy towers whose mobile cranes are used to clear truck accidents, but also small tow truck dealers who buy diesel chassis to which tow equipment is added to turn them into specialized tow trucks.

There is no shame in conceding that “a big, hairy audacious goal” cannot be met. Such goals, as the esteemed author Jim Collins explained in “Good to Great,” help us to strive and achieve productive change. He also counseled that great organizations do not shy from the Stockdale Paradox: “...[M]aintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of difficulties, *AND at the same time* have the discipline confront the brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.” (Emphasis in original.)

The brutal facts of Oregon’s diesel strategy are these:

- Oregon’s short-term and intermediate commands to switch from diesel- to electric-powered trucks, as articulated in its adoption by reference of the CARB’s rules, are not achievable. Neither EV capabilities nor charging technology infrastructure have advanced as quickly as was hoped for when the rules first were adopted.
- Oregon’s rules already are upending small Oregon towing businesses’ finances and ability to sustain 24/7 on-call emergency services to clear damaged vehicles from highway accident scenes.
- By effectively cutting off sales for the bulk of the tow fleet, the state’s rules rapidly are undermining the local industry’s vehicle and parts supply chain.
- *There are no EV replacements for the specialized use case of towing.* Tow trucks require:
  - Towing weight capacity for a wide range of consumer and commercial vehicles. Tow trucks range from light-duty for routine roadside assistance to 50+ ton capacity heavy trucks equipped with cranes to deal with complex truck crash scenes.
  - Long range and sustained on-scene mechanized operations. Towers often travel long distances to remote locations and operate their equipment on-scene for hours at a time. No EV can do that.
  - Ability to respond 24/7 without substantial out-of-service time. Even the best EVs, used now for last-mile package delivery, require hours of recharge time. Tow trucks need to go out on successive calls in short time proximity – just like ambulances, fire trucks, and police vehicles. Towers respond to thousands of highway recovery calls from the Oregon State Police and ODOT each year, 24/7 – a service whose reliability is put at severe risk by current diesel rules. (OSP and ODOT surely have extensive information about this, which we recommend that DEQ request.)

While the EQC’s one-year delay of heavy diesel-to-EV rules is modestly helpful in buying slightly more time for alternatives to develop, there are no viable EV chassis alternatives for 50-plus ton heavy-tow applications on the market or on drawing boards. Tow trucks account for only about 1 percent of all heavy truck sales, so it is unlikely that this specialized sector will be prioritized by manufacturers in their efforts to meet EV quotas.

The EQC's failure to provide regulatory relief for light- and medium-duty diesels, which comprise the bulk of the tow fleet, is disrupting tow businesses today. The complicated, downstream EV credit mechanism in the rules provides, at best, only theoretical relief.

OTTA members right now find themselves both unable to acquire replacement trucks, and that the state's rules have crashed the resale values of trucks they normally would sell to help fund replacements. Consequently, they are being forced to keep in service less reliable, more-polluting older diesel trucks that they otherwise would have replaced with cleaner new trucks.

A simple example to illustrate the inability to replace diesel with EV for towing applications given what is available today or what is expected in the next year or two: An electric Ford Lightning chassis, after adding equipment necessary for light-duty automobile tows, would have less than one ton of towing capacity; in other words, it could haul only a handful of the many models of automobiles on the road today. Most cars weigh between 2,500 and 4,500 pounds. New EVs are even heavier: GM's Ultium EV crossover automobile platform -- marketed as Acura ZDX Type S, Chevy Blazer, Cadillac Lyric, and Honda Prologue -- tips the scales at over three tons.

I do not lightly raise the alarm of near-term disruption of services that police agencies and consumers alike have come to rely upon. But I have had enough conversations with tow operators and dealers to come to the firm conclusion that if the state's ambitious diesel rules are left in place, then we will see towing business fail and consequently have far less capacity statewide to respond to crash scenes, stalled vehicles, and other incidents.

We implore DEQ to declare that Oregon is missing its ambitious goals, it is not giving up on its mission to reduce emissions, and consequently will adjust its strategy. We would suggest as practical steps:

- Delay all state "clean diesel" rules for three model years. One-year delays, as have been done previously, do little to assuage uncertainty that complicates business plans in an environment where replacement cycles have long runways.
- During such a delay, shift from an EV-only strategy and toward an all-of-the-above approach: Incentives (not mandates) to retire older diesels, incentives (not mandates) to increase use of so-called "clean diesel" fuel blends (such as reduced fuel taxes), and support for heavy capacity quick-charge infrastructure to support those commercial use cases that can more easily adopt EVs.

We believe both industry and consumers would welcome the state very publicly responding to the current reality that commanding near-term conversion to EVs across all sectors is not achievable without severe disruption and therefore it intends to adjust policy. OTTA is more than willing to assist DEQ in such an effort, and we request participation in any related Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

/s/

Tom Holt  
for the Oregon Tow Truck Association  
submitted via email