

WINTER 2018

# ROLLING ALONG

NORTH DAKOTA MOTOR CARRIERS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

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# ROLLING ALONG

NORTH DAKOTA MOTOR CARRIERS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

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# NEWS & NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



**MIKE GERHART**  
mike@ndmca.org

Hello Members,

As I reflect on 2018, I have many reasons to give thanks. I'm thankful for family, friends, their health and prosperity. I'm thankful for my families support as I finished my career with the North Dakota Highway Patrol and the opportunity provided to me by the NDMCA. I'm thankful for a past career where I had the opportunity to serve the public and for a new career where I get to advocate for an industry that does so much for our nation.

I'm thankful for the freedoms we have living in this great country and for those who have sacrificed all to protect those freedoms. December 15th was Wreaths Across America Day where we remember and honor those who gave their lives

in service to our country. On the cover of this publication is a picture of Britton Transport, a trucking partner with Wreaths Across America. Thank you Britton transport, and all trucking partners who deliver wreathes across our great nation.

I wish all our members a safe and prosperous 2019. Thank you for all you do!

Sincerely,

*Mike Gerhart*



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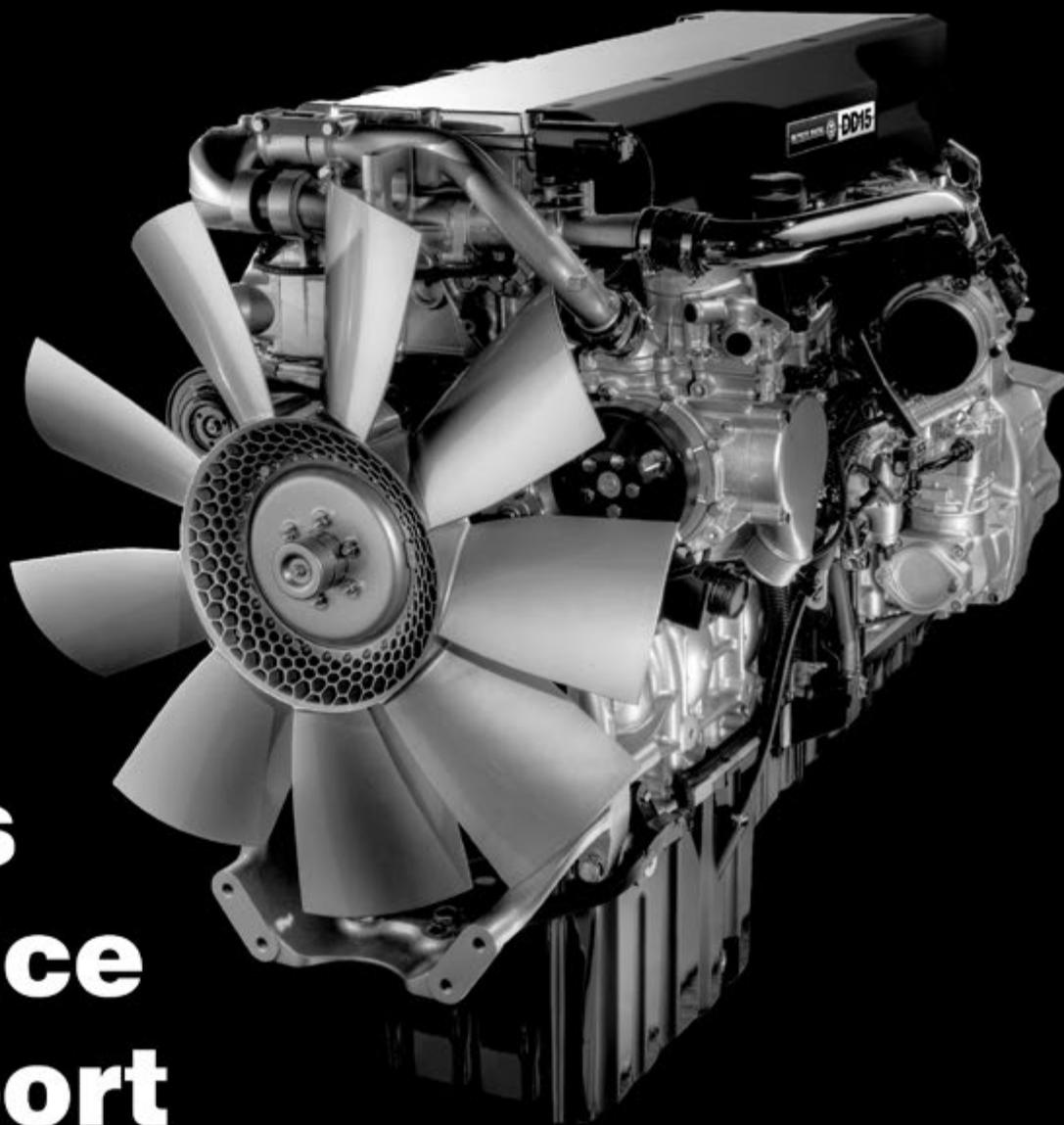
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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## ***Happy Holidays Fellow NDMCA Members!***

I love the holidays for many reasons, but the most important for me is the opportunity it brings to spend time with our team members, family, and friends. One thing is for sure, the only thing we cannot make more of, is time.

Many years ago, our family basically stopped with all the gift-giving (thank goodness for that) and started concentrating on time spent with one another. What we realized was today's world moves so fast and has all of us going in many different directions and taking the time to have a meaningful conversation requires effort. The holidays provide that opportunity and for that I am grateful.

My hope is for each of you, whether it is scheduling to get your drivers home for the holidays, planning time off for team members, or taking time out to visit with one another, it brings you as much joy as it does me.

May this holiday season bring you fond memories and happy times with friends and family. I wish for you the feeling of satisfaction knowing the new year will bring hope, opportunity and time to be a more effective leader.

I wish each of you a Merry Christmas, or whatever holiday you celebrate, and a happy and safe New Year. Here's to a prosperous 2019 filled with wonder and opportunity!

With gratitude,

*Melissa Dixon*

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## FOUNDATION NEWS

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# GOVERNMENT NEWS



## TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS FOR OVERSIZE AND OVERWEIGHT PERMITTED MOVEMENTS IN 2019

North Dakota Highway Patrol/Motor Carrier Operations  
Oversize/Overweight Permit Office (10-2018)

1. Permitted movements not exceeding 16 feet in width may travel on any day, ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.
2. Permitted movements that are over-height and/or over-length only, may travel on any day, ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.
3. Permitted movements that are ten feet in width or less, one hundred twenty feet long or less, or overweight only may travel on any day or night with proper lighting.

Holidays	Permit Office closed	Load Movement
New Year's Day	January 1, 2019	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on December 31 until ½ hour before sunrise on January 2.
Martin Luther King Day	January 21, 2019	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
President's Day	February 18, 2019	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
Good Friday	April 19, 2019	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
Memorial Day	May 27, 2019	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on May 25 until ½ hour before sunrise on May 28.
Independence Day	July 4, 2019	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on July 3 until ½ hour before sunrise on July 5.
Labor Day	September 2, 2019	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on August 31 until ½ hour before sunrise on September 3.
Veteran's Day	November 11, 2019	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
Thanksgiving Day	November 28, 2019	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on November 27 until ½ hour before sunrise on November 29.
Christmas Day	December 25, 2019	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on December 24 until ½ hour before sunrise on December 26.
New Year's Day	January 1, 2020	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on December 31 until ½ hour before sunrise on January 2.

4. North Dakota has a travel information map that provides width, length and height restrictions on state highways due to construction, road conditions, load restriction information, as well as weight limits placed on the state highways in the spring of the year. If you have any questions please contact the Permit Office at 701-328-2621 or visit the NDDOT travel information map at [www.dot.nd.gov/travel-info](http://www.dot.nd.gov/travel-info).



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# GOVERNMENT NEWS

## 2019 WSI LEGISLATIVE QUICK GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE

# WSI

North Dakota Workforce  
Safety & Insurance

The 2019 WSI Legislative Quick Guide is now available on WSI's website and can be accessed at [www.workforcesafety.com](http://www.workforcesafety.com) under the quick links section. There are

currently eight WSI related bills (including WSI's budget) and it is likely more bills will emerge once legislative session convenes. The quick guide will be updated periodically throughout session so you can monitor the status updates on WSI related legislation.

### WSI Board Sees Changes

WSI will have five new Board members beginning January 2019. As for the departing Board members, three members termed out, one opted to not run for another term, and one recently resigned. A sincere thank you to the departing members for their contributions and service. Departing Board members include:

- **Wally Keller**, Employer Representative (over \$25,000) and recent Board Chair. Wally was appointed in January 2011 and served two four year terms.
- **Pat Clement**, Employer Representative-At-Large. Pat was appointed in January 2011 and served two four year terms.
- **Bobbi Ripplinger**, Member At-Large. Bobbi was appointed in December 2004 and served a partial term and three four year terms.
- **Dr. Quast**, NDMA Representative. Dr. Quast was appointed in February 2014 and served a partial term and one four year term.
- **Matt Gardner**, Employee Representative (WSI benefit recipient). Matt was appointed in January 2017 and resigned in the Fall 2018.

The Governor recently made the following reappointment/appointments to the WSI Board:

- **Vicki Kunz**, Employee Representative. Vicki was appointed in January 2015 and was just reappointed for a second four year term beginning in January 2019. Vicki was also just elected as the new WSI Board Chair.

- **Ricky Richard**, Lieutenant with the Mclean County Sheriff's Office in Washburn, was just appointed to fill the vacated term of the Employee Representative (WSI benefit recipient) position effective December 2018.
- **Dr. Craig Lambrecht**, Executive Vice President of Sanford in Bismarck, was appointed to fill the Employer Representative (over \$25,000) position. His term will begin in January 2019.
- **Amber Schoenborn**, Vice President/Risk Manager/EEO Officer for Northern Improvement Company, was appointed to fill the Employer Representative-At-Large position. Her term will begin in January 2019.

Appointments for the Member-At-Large and NDMA positions are still pending.

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# GOVERNMENT NEWS

## VISION ZERO: ZERO FATALITIES. ZERO EXCUSES



Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury-related death in North Dakota. Over the past five years (2013 to 2017), there have been 643 people killed in motor vehicle crashes in North Dakota. These aren't just numbers – these are people impacted by motor vehicle crashes, which extends to families, friends, and communities.

The good news is that crashes are preventable. Research shows that ninety-four percent of crashes can be attributed to human error.

In January 2018, the North Dakota Department of Transportation, North Dakota Highway Patrol, North Dakota Department of Health and the Governor's Office, came together to launch Vision Zero: Zero fatalities. Zero excuses. The Vision Zero strategy aims to establish a culture of personal responsibility where motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries are recognized as preventable and not tolerated.

Vision Zero will be implemented through various safety strategies including: (1) widespread public education/outreach, (2) working with the legislature to ensure state laws represent

best practices in traffic safety, (3) implementing workplace policies that support driver and passenger safety, (4) conducting high visibility enforcement of existing laws, (5) applying technology advancements that make vehicles, roads and drivers safer, and (6) infrastructure/road safety improvements.

Every driver and vehicle occupant in North Dakota can help the state meet the Vision Zero goal of zero motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries on North Dakota roads by taking personal responsibility when traveling. This means always wearing a seat belt, transporting children in child passenger safety seats appropriate for the child's age, height, and weight, driving distraction free, driving sober (i.e. not under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs), and obeying all posted speed limits and all other traffic laws.

The Vision Zero goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries is attainable and vital. When it comes to your life and the lives of your family and friends, is any other number acceptable? Let us all arrive at our destination safely by each taking a role in Vision Zero.



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## PRE-SCREENING TECHNOLOGY

*The information below was prepared by Captain Eldon Mehrer, Deputy Chief of Operations, North Dakota Highway Patrol*

The North Dakota Highway Patrol (NDHP) has utilized pre-screening technology at fixed and roadside locations around North Dakota. The NDHP currently utilizes weight in motion (WIM) technology to screen commercial motor vehicles main line for weight compliance. The NDHP is also utilizing pre-screening technology for the screening of drivers, companies, and vehicles for safety criteria. Drivewyze and PrePass are two technologies employed in ND.

WIM technology is used at 17 locations around ND to verify a truck's configuration and to ensure its axle and gross vehicle weight are within acceptable limits. Officers can monitor these sites remotely and when at the sites to determine compliance.

Drivewyze is an intelligent transportation system service that provides bypasses to commercial vehicles as they approach participating state highway weigh/inspection stations. The participating vehicle's safety record, credentials, and weight are verified automatically, and if they comply with that state's screening rules for automated bypass, the vehicles are authorized to bypass these facilities rather than pull in for manual inspection. The equipment on the commercial vehicle or truck can be either the driver's smartphone or an electronic on-board recorder (EOBR) or electronic logging device (ELD). The device is usually mounted on the dashboard of the truck.

As a Drivewyze vehicle approaches a participating inspection or weigh station, the device communicates with the Drivewyze server via the cellular phone network and requests a bypass for the vehicle. Information associated with the device is then validated against state-required safety and credentials requirements. Because the device communicates over the cellular phone network, no "reader" is required at the weigh station to identify the vehicle. If the vehicle's credentials, safety, and weight data are all in order, a green indicator on the phone or EOBR advises the driver to bypass the facility. If the vehicle is required to pull-in for inspection, a red indicator and audible alert advises the driver to stop for inspection, just as trucks without Drivewyze must do. This results in time and fuel savings for the truck and less vehicle congestion at the weigh station. Drivewyze is currently available at over 700 facilities in 42 American states and one Canadian province.

PrePass is an intelligent transportation system service that

electronically verifies the safety, credentials, and weight of commercial vehicles at participating state highway weigh/inspection stations. Because they comply electronically, commercial carriers enrolled in PrePass are authorized to bypass these facilities rather than pull in for manual inspection. PrePass is available to motor carriers at nearly 300 facilities in 30 states. The only equipment required for a truck to participate in PrePass is a vehicle-specific transponder, mounted on the interior windshield with double-sided tape or dual-lock strips. These devices are similar to the transponders used for electronic toll collection. As a PrePass vehicle approaches an equipped facility, an electronic "reader" on a boom over the freeway interrogates the transponder. Information associated with the transponder is then validated against state-required safety and credentials requirements. As the truck passes beneath another electronic "reader" nearer the inspection point, the in-cab transponder receives a signal indicating whether the vehicle is authorized to bypass. If the vehicle's credentials, safety, and weight data are all in order, a green light advises the driver to bypass the facility. If the vehicle is required to pull-in for inspection, a red light alerts the driver to stop for processing, just as trucks without PrePass do. Only motor carriers that provide valid operating credentials and have an acceptable safety history are allowed to participate in PrePass.

These screening technologies provide efficiencies in time, fuel consumption, and safety for the carriers that utilize them. The NDHP also see efficiencies as it allows troopers and inspectors to devote their time addressing known problem carriers. Efficient use of time and resources benefit the state and the agency.





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# INDUSTRY NEWS

## CONGRATULATIONS ON 100 YEARS MIDWEST MOTOR EXPRESS, INC.



“Faster Johnny, faster Johnny!” Julius Roswick would yell to his grandson, John, as he drove his grandfather’s Cadillac to the lake in Garrison. These are fitting words from one of the founders of Midwest Motor Express, Inc., the trucking company celebrating its 100th birthday this year. Started in 1918 MME is a pioneer in the trucking industry and making it to 100 years is no small task. It takes a combination of rich history, innovative ideas, and talented hardworking people to reach this milestone.

### Rich History

In 1918 Charles Snyder, one of MME’s founders, began Snyder Dray and Transfer in Bismarck. Horses and wagons were the mainstays of transportation at the time and were used by Snyder to haul product. He combined forces with Julius Roswick and Joseph Greenstein and began operating as Roswick-Greenstein-Snyder, Inc. but changed the name in 1930. “They changed the name to Midwest Motor Express because they thought Roswick-Greenstein-Snyder sounded too much like a bunch of lawyers,” explains MME chairman of the board John Roswick. Originally located on Front Street MME moved to their current Bismarck location in the 1970’s.

When the company started the interstate road system didn’t exist and there was gravel between Bismarck and Minneapolis. “MME pioneered overnight service from Fargo to Minneapolis,”

explains Marlon Kling, president of MME. They now have 35 terminals and service 16 states as well as international marketing partners in Canada and China. As impressive as this growth, it hasn’t come without a few road blocks along the way.

In the 1980’s the trucking industry was deregulated and with deregulation came lower prices for customers and opportunity for MME. Efficiencies were identified that allowed MME to expand their reach nationally. The early 1990’s brought a labor dispute that ultimately led to strike. While the strike caused a shortage in drivers it became a defining time in MME’s history. “If we had been able to work with the Union and come to an agreement we may have had a different fate,” says Kling.

### Technology Advances

The transportation industry is constantly evolving and MME has done everything it can to stay in the forefront. Les Vaagen, VP of Carbon Claims, explains the impact technology has had on drivers, “The biggest change has been in logging. We started with paper log books for the Federal Department of Transportation regulations, everything was on paper. Now, you must use an electronic logging device. You punch into the truck with your driver ID and it tells you everything you need to do, even take breaks.” The drivers aren’t the only ones effected by the advances in technology. “The biggest change has been technology. It was a bit scary, but we made it through. Everything is computerized now,” says Connie Pleinis, Manager of Accounts Receivable.

MME has endured major world events including the Great Depression, World War II and 9/11. The company has continued to stay on the forefront of transportation technology and offers the best service to their customers. Equipment, technology, customers, and freight make MME a business, its rich history and incredible employees make MME a family.

*The NDMCA would like to thank Bismarck Magazine for allowing us to publish their article which was written by Jennifer Kranz for their September 2018 issue.*

# TMI TRANSPORT DRIVER REACHES 5 MILLION MILE MILESTONE

DICKINSON, North Dakota, Nov. 15, 2018 -- TMI Systems Corporation has recognized one of its employee drivers, Dwight "Whitey" Wunderlich, in his achievement of reaching 5 million career miles driven for TMI Transport.

Whitey began his career at TMI in February, 1980, and made an immediate impact within the transportation company which has included as many as 26 over-the-road drivers. Of the full time drivers at the time, he drove the most annual miles in 1981 and 1982, and was awarded TMI Driver of the Year, an award he would capture another 14 times within his 38 year career. He completed his first million miles in 1988.

TMI manufactures laminate clad casework, countertop, and architectural woodwork products for schools, hospitals and other commercial facilities across the contiguous United States. TMI Transport is an import part of getting the finished products to the construction site in good condition and on time. Whitey explains, "I'm always so proud to pull up to a job-site with TMI products."

Not only does Mr. Wunderlich stack up the miles for TMI, he does so safely and efficiently. He accepted a Ryder Safe Driving Award for 15 years of safe driving in 1996, and in 2002, the North Dakota Safety Council recognized him as its Driver of the Year, noting a record of 2.8 million accident free miles as a contributing factor. Dwight has received 11 Fuel Saver awards throughout his career, a TMI monetary bonus reward based on fuel efficiency and maximizing miles per gallon.

At the culmination of Whitey's driving career, he was recognized by the North Dakota Motor Carriers Association, which named him 2009 Driver of the Year for the region.

TMI's Chairman and CEO, Dennis Johnson, reflected on Dwight's career. "Whitey does a great job as an over-the-road truck driver. He goes beyond driving, going the extra mile by providing outstanding service to our job-site customers. He



cares about the customer and all our customers love Whitey. He is a real Pro and a TMI icon."

As Whitey's awards and recognition continue to accumulate, he endures down the highway with a full load of TMI products, in pursuit of the next million miles.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **February 25, 2019 – Fargo, ND**

- › Annual vehicle inspection seminar
- › Permitting and truck weight calculator
- › IRP and IFTA record keeping management

### **February 26, 2019 – Bismarck, ND**

- › Electronic log books
- › Permitting and truck weight calculator
- › IRP and IFTA record keeping management

### **February 27, 2019 – Williston, ND**

- › Annual vehicle inspection seminar
- › Permitting and truck weight calculator
- › IRP and IFTA record keeping management

### **February 28, 2019 – Minot, ND**

- › Electronic log books
- › Permitting and truck weight calculator
- › IRP and IFTA record keeping management

### **May 15, 16, 2019 – Bismarck, ND**

NDMCA Annual Convention

A great opportunity to receive industry leading training and network with professionals in the transportation industry

# TOP 10 TAX REFORM CONSIDERATIONS

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, commonly referred to as tax reform, was the most significant overhaul of our tax laws in more than 30 years. It affects all taxpayers. As 2018 comes to close and tax season looms just around the corner, there are a new set of complexities to consider moving forward. The resources you put into planning now could save you time and money in the future.

The sooner you start modeling alternative scenarios for multiple years, the sooner you can identify the strategies that are best suited for you and/or your business. Not sure where to begin? We've created a list of the top 10 considerations to help you paint a clearer picture of tax reform:



- 1. Corporate Rates:** The corporate tax rate has decreased to a 21 percent “flat” tax that will apply regardless of a regular corporation’s taxable income, so it’s important to review your business structure to be sure it still makes sense post-tax reform.
- 2. New Deduction for QBI:** The new 20 percent qualified business income deduction may provide you with tax savings, but limitations can apply—many businesses are reviewing their operations and business structures to ensure they obtain the maximum benefit from this deduction. If your business income qualifies, the top individual tax rate effectively drops from 37 percent to 29.6 percent.
- 3. Review Deductions:** Consider the timing of deductible expenses in light of the increase in the standard deduction. For businesses, it’s also important to note that entertainment expenses are no longer deductible, and changes have been made to the deductibility of meal expenses and certain fringe benefits, such as transportation.
- 4. State and Local Tax:** The aggregate itemized deduction for state and local income taxes or sales taxes and state and local property taxes is now limited to \$10,000. This will affect many taxpayers.
- 5. Alternative Minimum Tax:** While the individual AMT is left in place, the exemption amount has increased, and many individuals who have routinely been subject to the

AMT will no longer be subject to this additional tax.

**6. Accounting Methods:** Taxpayers using the accrual method of accounting may want to explore whether they qualify to change to the cash method, and other accounting method changes may be available that accelerate deductions into higher tax rate years.

**7. Depreciation:** The new law provides the option to take 100 percent bonus depreciation on qualifying asset purchases, so it’s important to figure out if this opportunity can benefit you, and whether it should affect the timing of those purchases.

**8. Child Tax Credit:** The child tax credit has increased to \$2,000 per child, and the phase-out thresholds have also increased, so you may want to

determine whether the increased credits will offset the effect of losing personal exemptions.

- 9. Alimony:** The tax treatment of alimony payments is set to change after 2018—if you’re considering a divorce, there may be varying income tax consequences depending on when it is finalized.
- 10. Estate Tax Exclusion:** The basic exclusion amount available to each individual for estate tax purposes has doubled, so it’s more important than ever to review your estate plan.

As you can see, tax reform has created a lot of changes—as well as opportunities—for businesses and individuals alike. The best course of action to determine your tax planning next steps should be to talk to your tax advisor. They can help you sort out the advantages or disadvantages of a specific approach and take a holistic view of your tax situation.

Our National Tax Office at Eide Bailly has been following and analyzing tax reform since its first inception in Congress to its current impact on businesses and individuals. We’ve created a resource center on our website, [www.eidebailly.com/taxreform](http://www.eidebailly.com/taxreform), to help people navigate how tax reform will impact them. We’ve included webinars, articles and other information that we hope will help people understand just how sweeping these changes were, and to encourage them to reach out for help with this complex new law.

# NDMCA SCHOLARSHIPS

## Emma Wahl

My name is Emma Wahl, and I am a senior at Dickinson High School. After graduation, I plan on attending Dickinson State University to obtain my Bachelor's degree in Biology. After completion of my undergraduate degree, I will be attending optometry school to become an eye doctor.

I sincerely thank the North Dakota Motor Carriers Association for selecting me as a recipient for this scholarship.

Thank you. Emma Wahl



## Brandon Prichard

Brandon Prichard, a current senior at Saint Mary's Central High School in Bismarck, North Dakota, is honored to receive the NDMCA scholarship. Brandon is actively involved in his school and community. He has served two years as a North Dakota Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) state officer and has nationally qualified in economics and public speaking in the organization. Brandon also is involved in the North Dakota Speech and Debate Association to which he has won over 50 awards including the 2018 State Title for Public Forum Debate. Brandon was also selected to serve as his local Team Captain for both his speech and debate teams. In November of 2018, Brandon also became the 2018 North Dakota Senate Congressional Debate Champion. In addition, Brandon has worked with state and local officials to found the North Dakota High School Republicans (NDHSR). As a founding member, Brandon was elected to serve as the State Chairman. He has overseen an increase of almost 300 high school members making the NDHSR one of the fastest growing organizations in North Dakota history. Brandon also interned for Kelly Armstrong during his US congressional campaign. Though he has received many awards and honors during his high school career, Brandon considers one of his most profound achievements as being a delegate for the United States Senate Youth Program. During March of his junior year, Brandon was given the opportunity of meeting President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, First Lady Melania Trump, and over 80 US Senators through the Senate Youth Program. Brandon is also tremendously proud of his community work throughout his high school career. Brandon has contributed over 200 hours of documented community service, most being at a local learning and development center. Brandon is also hard working in the classroom maintaining a GPA over 4.0 and being inducted to the National Honors Society. After graduation, Brandon intends to pursue a degree in economics and public policy. Brandon's hopes for the future including studying bankruptcy law at an Ivy League school.



## Mariah Mortensen

My name is Mariah Mortensen and I am a student at Dickinson State University. I am majoring in Exercise Science and I am on the volleyball team at DSU. I graduated from Dickinson High School in 2018 with High Honors. I was a member of the National Honor Society, Students for Service, Best Friends Mentoring Program, and the St. John's Senior High Youth Group. I have volunteered in many different places and each time has made an impact on my life. I love the feeling of helping people and our community. Volunteering is something that I am very passionate about and I am always willing to lend a helping hand.

I am the daughter of Brian and Carla Mortensen. My father Brian is the Regional Manager at Fisher Industries. My father has been employed there for 25 years. He has taught me to always work hard and be passionate in everything I do. He demonstrates leadership everyday through his job at Fisher Industries.

I am extremely blessed to be awarded the North Dakota Motors Carrier Association scholarship. I am very excited to continue my educational journey and I cannot wait to see what is in store for me in the future. With the help of this scholarship I will have more time to focus on the most important part of school, learning.



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# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DRIVER-ASSISTIVE TRUCK PLATOONING

by Adam Heily from Peloton

## Introduction

From autonomous two-seater pods to driverless big rigs, there has been a lot of discussion recently about the impacts vehicle automation technology will have on nearly every aspect of our lives. But while some futurists spend time debating the pros and cons of a world without drivers, the growing consensus is that it will be quite some time before such systems are ready to overcome the technical, regulatory, public acceptance, and business case hurdles that exist. Even then, many situations or types of freight operations will still require the expertise and skill only a professional driver can provide. As ATA President and CEO Chris Spear has said, “we are not looking at a future with driverless technology but rather driver-assist technology.”

Often overlooked amidst the “driverless truck” cacophony is a truck technology called Driver-Assistive Truck Platooning, or DATP. Unlike the driverless truck prototypes that have been demonstrated from time to time, drivers remain in command of each platooning truck at all times. A number of companies are bringing DATP to market and over the coming months several fleets will begin trying out truck platooning systems. But what exactly is DATP and how will it affect drivers?

## What is DATP?

At its core, platooning is technology that enables vehicles to be driven closer together safely to draft and save fuel. It’s a concept that has been studied for over a decade in the U.S., Europe, and Japan with cars and trucks, sometimes with two vehicles and sometimes with more. The concept of platooning drew a lot of attention a few years ago when the European Union organized the “European Truck Platooning Challenge,” which featured every major European truck OEM using prototype systems to platoon from origin points in Sweden, Germany, and Belgium to the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Some of these European OEMs are now moving towards commercializing platooning systems. Meanwhile, back here in the U.S., several companies have also been hard at work bringing DATP systems to market.

## Dispelling Myths

There is a fair amount of misunderstanding about what DATP is and isn’t. So here are the facts: With DATP systems, drivers are always required and are in control. The experience of a follow truck driver is similar to Adaptive Cruise Control, with hands on the wheel and eyes on the road, but feet off the pedals. The lead driver continues to drive as normal. In all known platooning



systems coming to market, both the lead driver and the follow driver also benefit from Collision Avoidance and other safety systems that remain active at all times. Both drivers must agree to form the platoon, and either one can end it at any time. And while there has been research into platoons of three or more trucks, the first commercial systems will be limited to two trucks.

## How It Works

There are three main elements to a safe “commercial-grade” DATP system. First, each truck needs the right equipment. This includes sensors that are aware of what’s on the road and secure, reliable vehicle-to-vehicle communications so the follow truck can

automatically link acceleration and braking with the lead truck. Platooning systems are also built on top of the latest safety technology, including air disc brakes, which reduce stopping distance and radar-based collision avoidance systems to prevent common types of highway accidents. This ensures individual DATP-capable trucks are among the safest trucks on the road, even when they aren't platooning.

Second, there needs to be a supervisory system to help match trucks and coordinate platoons. A supervisory system can also continuously monitor truck and DATP system health and limit platooning to approved roads. Like any precision tool, a DATP system should be used for its intended task: saving fuel on suitable stretches of multi-lane, divided, limited-access highways and interstates.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, a DATP system has to be built around the driver. It should be intuitive to use and always put the driver in control of what's happening. You would never want your cruise control system to override what you think is the safest course of action and a platooning system shouldn't either.

When these elements are combined, it's possible to have two trucks operate safely with a gap of around 40-60 feet to generate fuel savings. Independent testing has shown savings of about 4.5 percent on the lead truck and 10 percent on the follow truck when platooning. In an industry where fuel is about a third of total operating costs, these numbers are certainly getting the attention of fleets across the country. And because platooning creates real cost savings on fuel over the lifecycle of a truck, more fleets will be able to afford the required air disc brakes and collision avoidance systems, improving overall highway safety.

## ***Is it really safe?***

So how can the trucks be safe when operating so closely together in platoon? A professional driver takes on average 1.5 seconds to react to the slowing of a vehicle in front, or about 121 feet at 55 mph. Distraction or fatigue can significantly increase this distance to over 200 feet. In comparison, a platooning truck takes approximately one-tenth of a second to engage its brakes in reaction to the lead truck braking, or about 8 feet of traveling distance at 55 mph. The system never gets tired or distracted and reacts as soon as the brake pedal is pressed on the lead truck, which is even before the lead truck begins to slow due to brake lag. Additionally, the follow truck knows the braking force of the front truck, so it is able to respond with the degree of braking necessary to maintain a safe gap between the trucks. This all means the two trucks can safely follow at closer distances and save fuel.

Of course, drivers know it doesn't matter how well

a system is designed if it's not reliable. Commercial-grade DATP systems are built with redundancies and cybersecurity measures that don't exist in consumer products. We've all had a computer crash on us at an inopportune time. DATP systems have redundancies that will safely dissolve platooning if any errors are detected.

## ***Is it Legal?***

State following distance laws can pose a hurdle to commercial deployment of truck platooning. In about half of the states, a numeric following distance for commercial vehicles--ranging from 100 to 500 feet--is found in statute. In contrast, a slight majority of states have a flexible "reasonable and prudent" standard governing the following distance for commercial vehicles instead of a fixed following distance. Under existing North Dakota law, truck drivers must keep a reasonable and prudent distance between them and the vehicle in front. In order for fleets to take advantage of the safety and fuel efficiency benefits of truck platooning, it is expected the North Dakota legislature will consider legislation to allow for truck platooning. This simple, straightforward change would enable North Dakota fleets and truck drivers to benefit from this new technology. As of December 2018, eighteen states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin) have allowed for the full commercial deployment of truck platooning. At least another four (Arizona, Colorado, Florida, and New Mexico) have allowed for the limited commercial deployment of truck platooning. It is expected that several states in the Great Plains will consider legislative or administrative action to allow for truck platooning in 2019.

## ***What's Next***

Several companies in the U.S. and abroad are working to bring truck platooning to a road near you. Having trucks enabled for platooning requires that they are equipped with best-in-class collision avoidance and air disc brakes, features that are found on a very small fraction of U.S. freight trucks today. Commercial deployment of DATP will allow fleets to realize the financial benefit of increased efficiency, which will incentivize fleets to add these safety features. Despite what you see in some media stories, industry experts agree that you can expect to see pairs of driver-operated platooning-equipped trucks rolling on America's roadways well before you see robot-operated autonomous trucks zooming by.

# INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The North Dakota Motor Carriers Associations Industry Partnership Program is designed to provide for opportunities and recognition for levels of support to the Association. Sponsorship is open to both Allied and Carrier members. Levels are based on annual investments in Association sponsorship opportunities by an annual contract paid in full, quarterly or monthly or can be done on an event by event basis. Registration fees, booth fees and membership fees are not included in the calculation.

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A close-up photograph of a male technician with a beard and safety glasses, wearing a grey work shirt and gloves. He is focused on working on a large, complex industrial engine component, possibly a belt drive system. The background shows more of the engine and some yellow machinery, suggesting a workshop or factory setting.

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