



# Investigation into Towing Regulation in Tennessee

## **Problem Description**

According to TDOT Incident Management, 25% of the congestion is caused by traffic incidents. It is hypothesized that because of the long duration of disabled and abandoned vehicle incidents on freeways, secondary crashes are generated. The longer the disabled or abandoned vehicle along the highways before towing, the higher the likelihood of secondary collisions or other safety related incidents to be generated. Connected to towing regulations, for the past few years, incidents on Tennessee freeways have been dominated by disabled or abandoned vehicles, most of them which needed to be towed. Incident data have showed that disabled and abandoned vehicle incidents increase substantially at 7% per year. This study therefore will quantify the effects on clearance times in TN if innovative towing regulations were to be enacted. It is understood that updating towing regulations can be controversial, and Tennessee-specific data are needed to quantify any positive effects on clearance time.

### **PROJECT NUMBER:**

RES2023-21

### **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

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### **TDOT LEAD STAFF:**

Jon Storey  
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### **PROJECT SCHEDULE:**

August 2022 to January 2024

## **Research Objectives**

- Evaluate and determine if more advanced strategies like those used for commercial vehicle towing regulations would improve clearance times on Tennessee's interstates and State Routes.
- Review and evaluate innovative strategies for towing commercial vehicles, such as pay-by-the pound, zone-based coverage, and time-based incentive-disincentive payments.
- Evaluate primary incidents and secondary crashes occurring as a result of disabled and abandoned vehicles in Tennessee and how towing affects the incident durations, queuing and secondary crashes.
- Examine the impact of some sections of Tennessee Code Annotated, within Title 54 and Title 55, regarding removal of abandoned and disabled vehicles.
- Complete a detailed analysis of primary incidents and secondary crashes will be undertaken to establish the correlation between the incident durations and towing response time and towing technologies.

## **Potential Implementation and Expected Benefits**

The major benefits of the project will be to assess if changes in regulations would improve clearance times in Tennessee, if so, which changes are needed and would have the most benefit. Evaluation of the impact of towing will be a significant step to TDOT with respect to future transportation policy making, planning and implementation of safety programs along the freeways and major arterials which are experienced with different incidents daily. TDOT will be benefited by knowing quantitatively the impact of changing towing regulations and how primary incident durations and secondary crashes resulting from abandoned and disabled vehicle incidents will improve. The research will be used as an evaluating factor regarding Tennessee laws governing removal and towing of abandoned or disabled vehicles on access limited and other related facilities. Moreover, the findings will be used by TDOT Incident Management, safety officials, planners, policy makers, and law enforcement to reduce congestion and improve the safety and welfare of freeway users.

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