

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2020 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 587

BY SENATOR BEACH

[Introduced January 22, 2020; referred
to the Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure; and then to the Committee on
Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §17C-17-11 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended,
 2 relating to mandating escorts for vehicles operating on the highways of the state that
 3 exceed maximum width requirements.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 17. SIZE, WEIGHT AND LOAD.

§17C-17-11. Permits for excess size and weight.

1 (a) The Commissioner of Highways may, in his or her discretion, upon application in writing
 2 and good cause shown issue a special permit in writing authorizing:

3 (1) The applicant, in crossing any highway of this state, to operate or move a vehicle or
 4 combination of vehicles of a size or weight or load exceeding the maximum specified in this
 5 chapter or otherwise not in conformity with the provisions of this chapter, whether the operation
 6 is continuous or not, provided the applicant agrees to compensate the Commissioner of Highways
 7 for all damages or expenses incurred in connection with the crossing;

8 (2) The applicant to operate or move a vehicle or combination of vehicles of a size or
 9 weight of vehicles or nondivisible load exceeding the maximum specified in this chapter or
 10 otherwise not in conformity with the provisions of this chapter; and

11 (3) The applicant to move or operate, for limited or continuous operation, a vehicle hauling
 12 containerized cargo in a sealed, seagoing container to or from a seaport or inland waterway port
 13 that has or will be transported by marine shipment where the vehicle is not, as a result of hauling
 14 the container, in conformity with the provisions of this article relating to weight limitations, upon
 15 the conditions that:

16 (A) The container be hauled only on the roadways and highways designated by the
 17 Commissioner of Highways;

18 (B) The contents of the container are not changed from the time it is loaded by the
 19 consignor or the consignor’s agent to the time it is delivered to the consignee or the consignee’s
 20 agent; and

21 (C) Any additional conditions as the Commissioner of Highways or the Public Service
22 Commission may impose to otherwise ensure compliance with the provisions of this chapter.

23 (b)(1) The Commissioner of Highways may issue a special permit to operate or move a
24 vehicle or combination of vehicles of a size or weight of vehicles or nondivisible load exceeding
25 the maximum specified in this chapter or otherwise not in conformity with the provisions of this
26 chapter over routes designated by the Commissioner of Highways upon terms and restrictions
27 prescribed by the Public Service Commission, together with the Commissioner of Highways.

28 (2) For purposes of this section, nondivisible load means any load exceeding applicable
29 length or weight limits which, if separated into smaller loads or vehicles, would:

30 (A) Compromise the intended use of the vehicle, to the extent that the separation would
31 make it unable to perform the function for which it was intended;

32 (B) Destroy the value of the load or vehicle, to the extent that the separation would make
33 it unusable for its intended purpose; or

34 (C) Require more than eight work hours to dismantle using appropriate equipment:
35 *Provided*, That the applicant for a nondivisible load permit has the burden of proof as to the
36 number of work hours required to dismantle the load.

37 (3) The Commissioner of Highways may, in his or her discretion, upon application in writing
38 and based upon an engineering analysis, issue a special permit in writing authorizing the
39 applicant, when operating upon any highway of this state designated by the commissioner, to
40 operate or move a vehicle or combination of vehicles, hauling commodities manufactured for
41 interstate commerce, of a size or weight or divisible load exceeding the maximum specified in this
42 chapter or otherwise not in conformity with the provisions of this chapter, whether the operation
43 is continuous or not.

44 (A) The engineering analysis must demonstrate that the vehicle permitted under this
45 subdivision does not adversely affect the designated routes when compared to the size, weight,
46 and load provisions of this chapter.

47 (B) The maximum gross vehicle weight permitted under this subsection is 120,000
48 pounds.

49 (C) The permit may contain any additional conditions the Commissioner of Highways or
50 the Public Service Commission may impose to otherwise ensure compliance with the provisions
51 of this chapter.

52 (4) The Commissioner of Highways may, in his or her discretion, upon application in
53 writing, issue a special permit in writing authorizing the applicant to transport logs, wood chips,
54 timber, other natural raw wood, lumber, paper, wood veneer, wood pellets, or any other wood
55 product of the forest, craft, or manufacturing. The vehicle authorized by the permit shall be a
56 tractor-semitrailer combination with six axles, each axle equipped with brakes, and limited to a
57 maximum gross vehicular weight of 94,000 pounds, without any tolerance. The maximum weight
58 of each axle, beginning with the steering axle commencing rearwards, respectively shall be
59 15,000 pounds, 17,000 pounds, 17,000 pounds, 15,000 pounds, 15,000 pounds, and 15,000
60 pounds. The tractor shall have one steer axle and two drive axles in tandem, and the trailer shall
61 have three trailer axles in tridem. The distance between the last drive axle of the tractor and the
62 first trailer axle shall be a minimum of 29 feet and six inches. Permits under this subdivision will
63 not be issued for any vehicle traveling on interstate routes.

64 (c) The application for any permit other than a special annual permit shall specifically
65 describe the vehicle or vehicles and load to be operated or moved along or across the highway
66 and the particular highway or crossing of the highway for which the permit to operate is requested,
67 and whether the permit is requested for a single trip or for a continuous operation.

68 (d) The Public Service Commission is authorized to issue or withhold a permit at his or her
69 discretion; or, if the permit is issued, to limit the number of trips, or to establish seasonal or other
70 time limitations within which the vehicles described may be operated on or across the highways
71 indicated, or otherwise to limit or prescribe conditions of operation of the vehicle or vehicles, when
72 necessary to assure against undue damage to the road foundations, surface, or structures, and

73 may require the undertaking, bond, or other security considered necessary to compensate for any
74 injury to any roadway structure and to specify the type, number, and the location for escort
75 vehicles for any vehicle: *Provided*, That in establishing limitations on permits issued under this
76 section, the Public Service Commission shall consult with the Commissioner of Highways, and
77 may not issue, limit, or condition a permit in a manner inconsistent with the authority of the
78 Commissioner of Highways.

79 The Public Service Commission may charge a fee for the issuance of a permit for a mobile
80 home and a reasonable fee for the issuance of a permit for any other vehicle under the provisions
81 of this section to pay the administrative costs thereof.

82 (e) Every permit shall be carried in the vehicle or combination of vehicles to which it refers
83 and shall be open to inspection by any police officer or authorized agent of the Commissioner of
84 Highways or the Public Service Commission, and no person shall violate any of the terms or
85 conditions of the special permit.

86 (f) A special permit to operate or move a vehicle or combination of vehicles of a width
87 exceeding the maximum specified in this chapter over routes designated by the Commissioner of
88 Highways upon terms and restrictions prescribed by the Public Service Commission, together
89 with the Commissioner of Highways, shall have escort vehicles at the front and at the rear of the
90 vehicle or combination of vehicles that are the subject of the special permit.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to mandate escorts for vehicles operating on the highways of the state that exceed maximum width requirements.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.