Long-haul Trucking Focus Group Presentation

Prepared for

Utah Department of Transportation, InterPlan, & Love Communications

Lighthouse Research & Development, Inc.

Project Overview

- Project consultation
- Recruitment of participants
- Development of the focus group discussion guide
- Moderation of the focus groups
- Findings analysis
- Written report
- Presentation of findings

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OWNERS & OPERATORS

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Owners & Operators

Truck Stop Descriptions

- 4 of 6 had between 30 and 88 long-term truck parking spaces
- Most participants said that on an average weeknight and an average weekend, their truck parking is full or nearly full

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Owners & Operators

Concerns

Overall, participants:

- Agreed that finding available truck parking is a challenge for many drivers
- Felt the greatest truck parking shortage exists along the I-15 corridor
  - Some specifically identified the Salt Lake City area
  - Others specifically identified industrial areas between Salt Lake City and Logan

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Owners & Operators

Ideas to assist truck drivers find parking:

- Expand or open rest stops
- Provide information to drivers via GPS locators
- Increase signage along freeways and highways, specifically DOT markers

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Owners & Operators

Expansion

- Expansion does not seem feasible or profitable
- Motivation to consider expansion:
  - Compensation (tax breaks or incentives)
  - Guarantee of return on investment
  - Assistance in maintaining the property
- Suggested better solution might be to open rest stops that have been closed
- Some considered opening additional locations ➔ resistance from communities

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Owners & Operators

Communication with Drivers

- Participants do not track parking availability at their station
  - Too difficult due to constant movement
- Current communications:
  - No communication
  - Word of mouth
  - “Regulars” call and ask
  - Dispatch will sometimes route drivers to their location

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Owners & Operators

Communication with Drivers

- Regarding the Smartphone app:
  - Important for drivers to know parking availability at various truck stops, particularly on weekends
  - Accuracy and validity of information
  - Will drivers use it?
- Regarding the paper maps:
  - Neutral or slightly negative feelings toward the idea
  - Drivers already have GPS locators for this
  - Drivers already have regular “routines”
  - Open to the idea of listing their locations on such a map

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Owners & Operators

Looking Ahead

- Incentives would encourage expansion
  - Money
  - Tax breaks
  - Assistance with maintenance
- Would consider partnering with the state if it were beneficial to their establishment
  - Monetary incentives
  - Assistance with maintaining facilities
  - Additional DOT markers

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Owners & Operators

Demographic Profile

- 6 owners & operators
- 4 male, 2 female
- ***4*** have managed their locations for ***1 to 5 years***
- ***3*** have ***Bachelor's degrees***
- All ***6*** are ***married***

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LONG-HAUL TRUCK DRIVERS

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Description of Utah Truck Parking

- Limited
- Shortage
- Often forced to park in non-designated areas
  - Exit ramps
  - Store parking lots – Walmart, Shopko
- Truck drivers unwelcome in Utah
  - Shortage of truck parking
  - Closure of state rest stops
  - "Harassed" by UHP officers for parking in undesignated areas – not ticketed, but nowhere to stop
  - Safety dictates need for stopping, but often there is no where to do so

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Description of Utah Truck Parking

- Truck parking shortage

"Between here and down South, there's only a few of them."

"If you come into town at four or five in the afternoon and you're not there by three, there's no parking."

"From Spanish Fork to Brigham City there's nothing."

"From the time you get to the point of the mountain to North Salt Lake, there's three truck stops. And they're all owned by Flying J."

"We had a couple of rest stops and they wiped them out. Park City, Silver Summit, Pleasant Grove…"

- Rest stop preference, but passenger vehicles interfere

"There are rest areas just for trucks, but people that have passenger vehicles will park there and take up a spot we could use. It's aggravating."

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Areas with the Greatest Shortage

- In Salt Lake City
- Along the I-15 corridor
- Provo to Ogden
- St. George to Ogden

"You get out of Salt Lake, you only have one real state rest stop, and anywhere else, you're going to have to go find a commercial truck stop."

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Problematic Parking Shortage

- Limited driving hours – MUST find parking when the shift is up
- Governors restrict driving speed
- Early stops to guarantee parking cut into driving time

"Our trucks have GPS on them, and if your time's up, your truck shuts down on you. If you can't get into a place, you could be shut down on the side of the highway."

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Finding Truck Parking

- Driving the same routes, stay at the same places
- Planning ahead to help anticipate where to stay
- Truck stop guides

"I go all over the country and I use the truck stop guide, and I also have an exit guide that tells me where to park."

- Observing others

"There's a street in Midvale, they let the trucks park there. It's behind McDonald's there on 7200. You don't get harassed there."

- Avoid stopping in Utah

"You've got to plan in advance. I team drove, and we would not stop in Utah, not even for fuel. When I'd load up and come back, I'd make sure I had plenty of fuel so I could drive on by. I didn't even want to stop here."

- Use cell phones

"There's a new app on my phone that will tell me everything. I use Google Earth. You can look around, scroll, and see if they have a truck stop. Even if it isn't a truck stop, if it's an industrial area it should be ok."

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Influencing Factors on Where to Park

- Access to services and amenities

"I like to look for a place to take a shower and grab a good bite to eat. Things we need, to maybe do laundry."

- Size of load and space available

"Right now, some of the rest areas we've got, there's just not enough room. You're just about scraping your mirrors off, and you go up on the curb just to make sure you don't rip the other guys' off."

- Some avoid truck stops
  - Trucks damage
  - "Lot lizards" disturbance

"Most of the time, I try to avoid truck stops. My truck has been damaged when in truck stops. I prefer rest stops, but Utah is very lacking in rest areas. Other states, there are a lot of rest stops; they're well lit."

"A lot of the times, I don't stop at truck stops because you don't want them lot lizards knocking on your door all night."

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Useful Materials

- Guides used to find parking information:
  - Exit guides
  - TCH book
  - Rand McNally map
- Places these materials are stored:
  - Visors
  - In the truck door
  - Cubbies
  - Passenger seats
- Other items used:
  - Computers
  - GPS
  - CB radios

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Suggestions for Communicating Availability

- Increased signage
  - "Truck Stop Ahead" "Next Rest Area"
  - Distance to next three rest stops
- Distribute materials about available parking
  - Major trucking companies' headquarters
  - Postings in company newsletters
  - Public areas that see a diversity of drivers
    - Truck stops
    - Travel bureaus
    - State welcome centers
- Add symbols to existing maps, such as Rand McNally
- Post parking information on a website

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Yellow Visor Card

Please rate the overall usefulness of this map.

1 – Not at all Useful	0
2	3
3	4
4	2
5	5
6	4
7 – Very Useful	0
Average Mean	*4.17*
Median	*4.50*

Likes

- Information provided
- Separated by area
- Allows for taking notes

Dislikes

- Layout and design
  - Too many pages – need to be able to look at it while driving
  - Separation by area could be confusing
- Difficult to read
- Lacks critical information
  - Services and amenities available
  - Types of parking available (oversized, overweight, hazmat, etc.)

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Pink Visor Card

Please rate the overall usefulness of this map.

1 – Not at all Useful	1
2	2
3	7
4	3
5	2
6	3
7 – Very Useful	0
Average Mean	*3.67*
Median	*3.00*

Likes

- A lot of information
- Familiar design
- QR code on the back

Dislikes

- Too complex
- Too confusing
- Provides too much information

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Blue Visor Card

Please rate the overall usefulness of this map.

1 – Not at all Useful	0
2	2
3	8
4	1
5	1
6	5
7 – Very Useful	1
Average Mean	*4.11*
Median	*3.00*

Likes

- More information than other visors
- Full map of the state, pinpoints locations for each truck stop
- Information about rest areas

Dislikes

- Confusing
- Hard to read
- Difficult to see at-a-glance
- Some felt it was too much information

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Green Visor Card

Please rate the overall usefulness of this map.

1 – Not at all Useful	0
2	0
3	4
4	4
5	2
6	3
7 – Very Useful	5
Average Mean	*5.06*
Median	*5.00*

Likes

- Easy to read
- Large print and color combinations
- Do not have to open it all the way unless they need more information

Dislikes

- Lacking information
- White-on-black text is difficult to read at night

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Orange Visor Card

Please rate the overall usefulness of this map.

1 – Not at all Useful	0
2	0
3	3
4	7
5	1
6	2
7 – Very Useful	5
Average Mean	*4.94*
Median	*4.00*

Likes

- Layout and design make it easy to read
- Color-coded information
- Exit numbers, locations of truck stops
- Full map

Dislikes

- Lacking information
  - Types of parking available
  - Miles between each truck stop
  - Which truck stops are most accessible

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Critical Information

- Exit numbers
- Locations
- Number of parking spaces available
- Quick Response (QR) code
- Truck stop name

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Missing Information

- Information about rest stops
- Truck stop addresses
- Services and amenities available
- Hours of operation
- Type of parking available:
  - Overnight
  - Sizes – double/triple spaces

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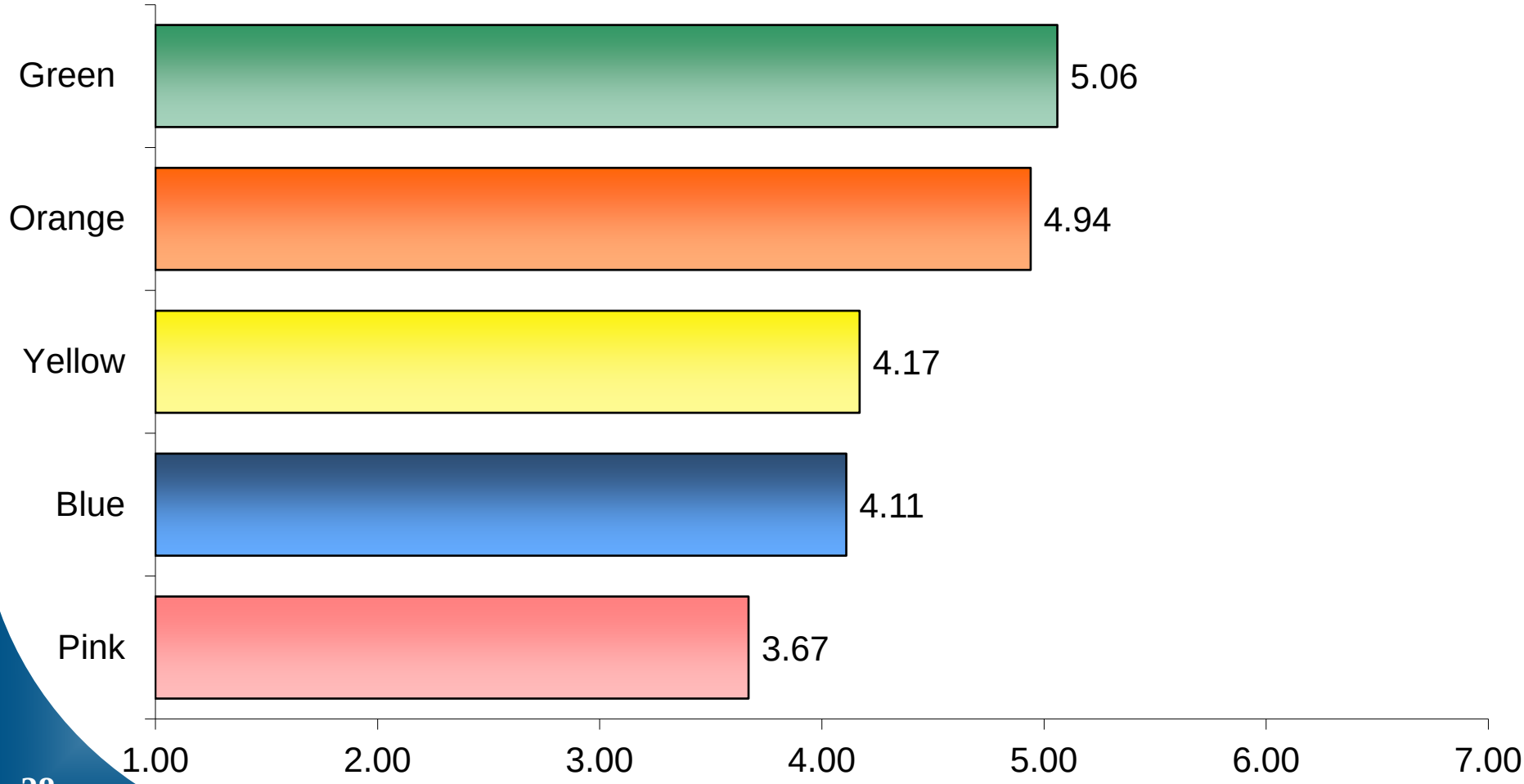
Long-haul Truck Drivers

Please rate the overall usefulness of each visor card.

Based on a one-to-seven rating scale where one is "not at all useful" and seven is "very useful"



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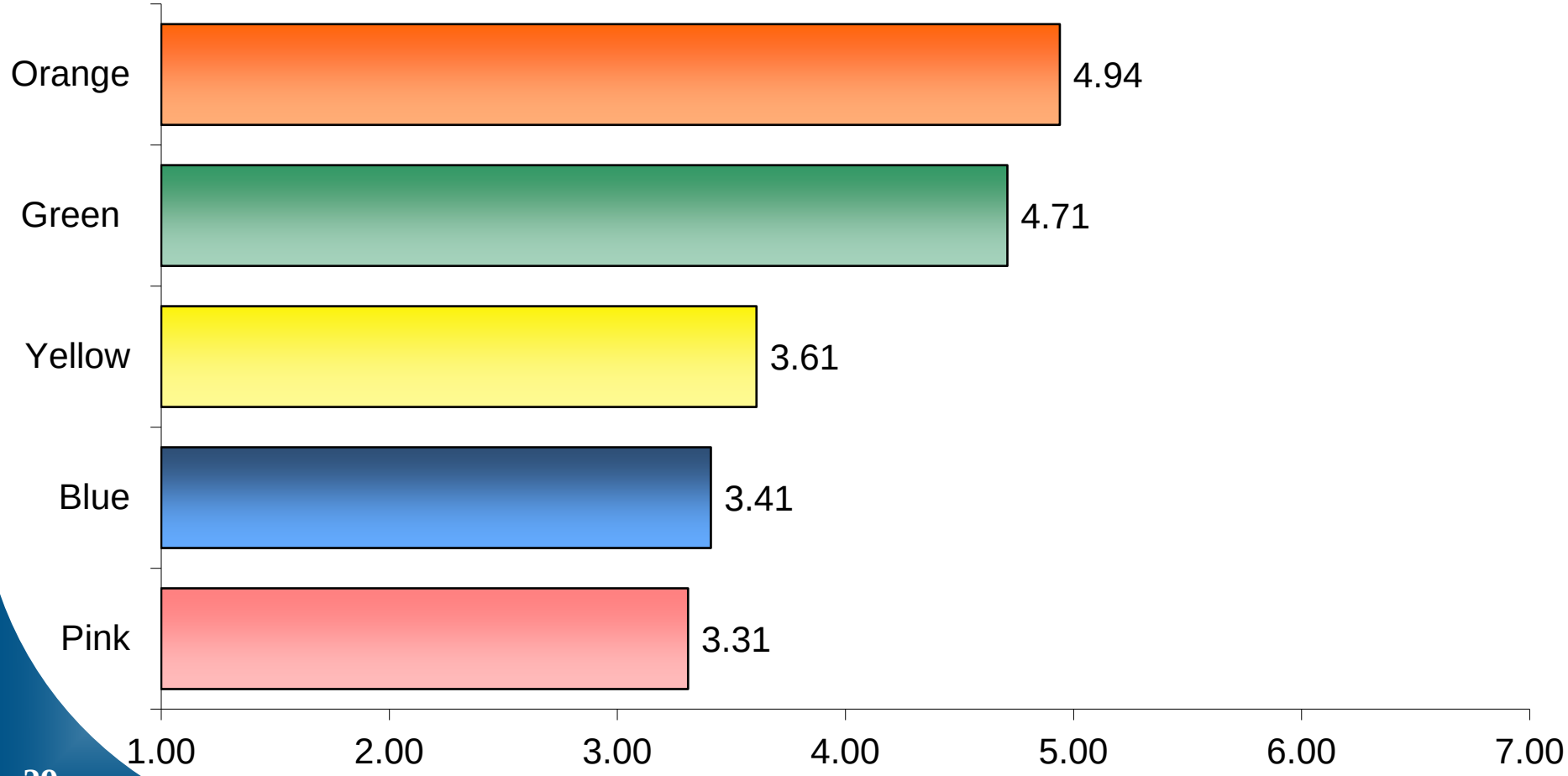
Long-haul Truck Drivers

Please rate how likely you would be to use each map to locate long-term truck parking.

Based on a one-to-seven rating scle where one is "not at all useful" and seven is "very useful"



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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Please rank the five maps we just discussed according to preference.

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Average Rank (1-5)	Rank score
Yellow	3	1	8	3	3	3.11	52
Pink	1	1	3	9	3	3.50	39
Blue	0	4	2	2	9	3.83	39
Green	6	4	3	2	2	2.28	61
Orange	7	7	2	1	1	**2.00**	**72**

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Suggestions for Improvement

- Print visor cards on more durable material
  - Too lightweight, would easily become damaged
  - Laminate glare difficult to read at night
- Change color of white-on-black text areas
- Add more information
  - Rest area locations
  - Available services and amenities
  - Types of parking available
- Use symbols to indicate specific items

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Likelihood of Using a Smartphone App

- Nearly all participants have cell phones, most are Smartphones
- Some would not use it
  - "Don't do well with these new gadgets"
  - Many apps are "not very user friendly"
- Some have considered using an app to find parking in Utah
- Many would use a Smartphone app in Utah
  - Particularly younger drivers and new drivers

"I think if you were to take a poll, the group coming in their 20s and 30s won't pick up a piece of paper. They would use an app. Even me, I hardly use a road atlas anymore."

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Concern with Smartphone Apps

- Using phones while driving

"There is one major problem with it. It is illegal in parts of the country to use a cell phone. If a cop sees you, you're done. In California, that's a $500 ticket."

"With using cell phones, you can use a bluetooth, but you can't hold a phone to your head and you can't text. [Using an app] would count as distracted driving."

Solutions to Concern

- Drivers can bookmark the app and use it to plan routes before heading out

"It's a know-before-you-go situation."

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

What Drivers Want in an App

- Rest stops included
- Services and amenities available at stops
  - Showers
  - Hot meals
  - Fuel prices
  - Parking availability

  "I know a lot of independents, that if they can get updates on fuel prices, they would pay for the app just to have that. When you're buying 200 gallons of fuel at the same time, a few cents add up."

  "If you could look ahead and see that they have spaces left, and they have spaces, you think, 'I'll stop there.' If they only have a few spaces left and you're a half hour out, you think, 'I'm going to stop now.'"
- Pull-through parking availability
- Availability of double- and triple-load parking

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

App Design

- Information must be accurate
- Skepticism with accuracy of parking accuracy

  "I think it would be hard to constantly update that number. There's times where I pull into a truck stop and you circle around and there's nothing. It goes from one to zero just like that."

- Include various universal symbols to indicate:
  - Food
  - Showers
  - Availability of double- and triple-load parking

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Demographics

- 18 total truck drivers
- All participants were male
- 6 were ages of 45 and 49
- 3 were ages 35 to 39
- 8 have more than 20 years of long-haul driving experience
- 2 participants drive refrigerated trucks
- 14 participants are married

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CONCLUSIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

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Owners & Operators

Consider:

- Opening rest areas
- Shuttle service between rest stops and necessary services and amenities
- Incentives to private businesses to encourage expansion and partnership with the State: tax breaks/incentives, DOT markers, assistance with maintenance
- Illustrating financial benefits of truck stop expansion
- More DOT markers along freeways
- Alleviating community resistance to new truck stops through support

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Consider:

- Opening rest areas
- DOT markers
- Distributing visor cards through:
  - Organizations such as Utah Trucker's Association, Utah Travel Council
  - State welcome centers or ports of entry
  - Truck stops
  - Rest areas
- Improving preferred visor cards - orange and green visor cards
- Adding critical information to visor cards

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Consider:

- Keeping information on visor cards:
  - Exit numbers
  - Locations
  - Number of parking spaces available
  - Name/brand of truck stops
- Using durable, non-laminated material
- Consider eliminating white-on-black text on the visor cards

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Long-haul Truck Drivers

Consider:

- Creating Smartphone app to inform truck drivers of truck stops and rest areas.
- Including on the app:
  - Parking availability
  - Fuel prices
  - Services and amenities
  - Hours of operating
  - Types of parking available
- Accurate and up-to-date information

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QUESTIONS?

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