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GRADUATED COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE FOCUS GROUP STUDY

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Designing a Graduated Commercial Drivers License

A Report on Focus Group Findings

Final Report

Prepared for
The American Trucking Associations
Trucking Research Institute

By

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Executive Summary

A graduated driver's license is a system designed to ease beginning drivers into the traffic environment under controlled exposure to progressively more difficult driving experiences. A graduated driver's license helps improve the driving skills of novice drivers and helps them acquire on-the-road experience under less risky conditions by progressing, or graduating, through driver stages before unrestricted licensure.

Focus groups with members from ten organizations with interest in commercial vehicle operations and safety indicate support for a graduated *commercial* drivers license (GCDL) as a means for improving commercial vehicle safety. These groups were divided over whether or not younger drivers (e.g., drivers between 18 and 21 years of age) should be eligible for an interstate GCDL as a means for attracting new entrants into the field and increasing the pool of qualified drivers.

Focus groups were conducted with the following organizations:

- American Bus Association Drivers Competition
- American Bus Association Safety Directors
- National Private Truck Council Safety Committee
- Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Driver Committee
- Owner Operator Independent Driver Association Board
- Pennsylvania Transit Safety Professionals
- Commercial Vehicle Training Association Safety Committee
- American Trucking Association "Road Team" Drivers
- Motor Carrier Insurance Company Representatives
- American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators Drivers License Committee

Focus group participants responded to a number of questions summarized in the tables below.

Question 1: *What are the primary factors (requirements, restrictions, conditions) that should be considered for a graduated commercial driver's license?*

After participants listed factors and voted for those they felt were most important, six factors accounted for about three-fourths of the votes cast across all ten focus groups:

GCDL Factor	Average % of Votes Cast
Commercial Driver Training	37%
Previous Driving Record	11%
Previous Driving Experience	8%
Restrictions under GCDL	8%
Minimum Age for GCDL	8%
Commercial Driver Testing	4%

Question 2: What are reasonable levels of these factors and when should full licensure be granted?

GCDL Factor	Typical Responses
Commercial Driver Training	Range: 1 week to 2 years; Median: 3 months
Previous Driving Record	Eligibility for GCDL based on accidents, violations and citations, DUI/DWI, and reckless driving record
Previous Driving Experience	Minimum period with personal vehicle license of 1-4 years
Restrictions under GCDL	Restrictions on hours of service, equipment, cargo, terrain, weather, road conditions, time of day, and passengers
Minimum Age for GCDL	Range: 15 years to 25 years; 40% said 18 years; 31% said 21 years; Median 19.5 years
Commercial Driver Testing	Periodic re-testing; knowledge and road tests under realistic driving conditions

The final three questions sought general attitudes toward a graduated CDL, focusing on issues of age and additional restrictions or requirements for obtaining a CDL.

Question 3: How do you feel about a GCDL that permits drivers under 21 to operate commercial vehicles in interstate commerce?

Source	Oppose	Favor	Uncommitted
American Bus Association Drivers	50%	29%	21%
American Bus Association Safety Directors	52%	48%	0%
ATA Road Team	55%	36%	9%
CVSA Driver Committee	41%	59%	0%
NPTC Safety Committee	30%	67%	3%
OOIDA Board	76%	19%	5%
PA Transit Safety Professionals	63%	37%	0%
Motor Carrier Insurers	0%	75%	25%
<i>Grand Total</i>	49%	45%	6%

Question 4: How do you feel about a GCDL that further restricts the current CDL?

Source	Oppose	Favor	Uncommitted
American Bus Association Drivers	54%	29%	17%
American Bus Association Safety Directors	52%	26%	22%
ATA Road Team	18%	64%	18%
CVSA Driver Committee	19%	56%	26%
NPTC Safety Committee	13%	73%	13%
OOIDA Board	14%	62%	24%
PA Transit Safety Professionals	40%	50%	10%
Motor Carrier Insurers	0%	100%	0%
<i>Grand Total</i>	29%	53%	18%

These two questions show the dichotomy within the commercial vehicle community. Less than half of the participants favored issuing GCDLs to drivers younger than 21 but slightly more than half of the respondents favored implementation of a GCDL that adds some additional restrictions to the current CDL. Less than one-third of the participants opposed a GCDL that might restrict the current CDL.

The final question addressed participants overall assessment of whether or not a GCDL is needed, specifically:

Question 5: Do you think a GCDL is needed?

Source	Oppose	Favor	Uncommitted
American Bus Association Drivers	67%	33%	0%
American Bus Association Safety Directors	61%	39%	0%
ATA Road Team	18%	73%	9%
CVSA Driver Committee	15%	70%	15%
NPTC Safety Committee	7%	83%	10%
OOIDA Board	38%	62%	0%
PA Transit Safety Professionals	45%	40%	15%
Motor Carrier Insurers	0%	100%	0%
<i>Grand Total</i>	34%	59%	7%

Responses to this question show a solid majority of respondents in favor of a GCDL of some type. With this endorsement of the GCDL concept, FHWA can reasonably proceed with a larger survey to determine if broader support for the GCDL concept exists within the commercial vehicle community.

Toward that end, this report includes illustrative questions to that could be used in a national survey and suggests the populations to be surveyed and the formats for administering the survey. Questions are suggested that address the major factors identified through this study.

Beyond the national survey, some additional research is needed to address both the effectiveness (i.e., increased motor carrier and motor coach safety) and the cost (implementation, administration, and enforcement) associated with a graduated CDL. Experience with personal driver's licenses in states that have graduated driver's licenses may provide the information necessary to inform this discussion.

Study Background

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), graduated drivers licensing would provide “a system designed to ease beginning drivers into the traffic environment under controlled exposure to progressively more difficult driving experiences. This system helps improve their driving skills and helps them acquire on-the-road experience under less risky conditions by progressing, or graduating, through driver licensing stages before unrestricted licensure.”¹ The Trucking Research Institute (TRI), which is the research element of the American Trucking Associations Foundation, Inc., under contract to the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (Contract No. DTFH-96-X-00022, Work Order No. 7) was “to query the motor carrier industry (both truck and bus operators), drivers, driving training schools, insurance carriers, and the driver licensing and law enforcement communities, about the need for, benefits of, and potential acceptance of graduated licensing for commercial motor vehicle operators.”²

Under this work order, TRI was to conduct at least one focus group with each of the affected groups. The focus groups were to be conducted by TRI and led by a facilitator chosen by the TRI Program Manager. The purpose of the focus groups was to glean participants' attitudes toward the concept of a graduated license and their willingness to accept it. The focus groups also serve to outline several implementation scenarios of a graduated CDL which to be used later in a mail survey of all affected groups.

Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) was selected by TRI to serve as facilitator for these focus groups.

Study Objective

The objective of this effort was to plan, facilitate, and document focus groups with the affected groups listed above in order to discover and document their attitudes toward a GCDL and to identify what each group believed were most important factors to be considered in designing a GCDL. Specifically, the focus group process was designed to accomplish the following:

- To learn participants' attitudes toward the concept of a graduated commercial drivers license (GCDL) and their willingness to accept it.
- To identify alternative GCDL implementation scenarios to be used later in a mail survey of all affected groups

Study Assumptions and Caveats

This study was designed primarily to gain insight into government and industry attitudes toward a graduated drivers license and to discover some of the factors that should be included in a national survey on the topic. While the organizations and individuals that participated in focus groups are well-versed in CVO and CDL issues, they do not constitute a statistically valid stratified random sample of the population that would be affected by the introduction of a graduated CDL. The primary assumption in this study is that the focus groups assembled for this study are sufficient to identify the relevant factors to be considered in formulating a GCDL and that they provide a reasonable sense of how others might respond to a GCDL if it were available. The subsequent survey will use the information gained through this study to design a survey instrument to be used in gathering data from a more representative sample of groups with interest in CVO and CDL issues.

Study Approach

This exploratory study was performed in the following steps:

- 1) Meet with ATA/TRI sponsor to set study objectives and expectations.
- 2) Review previous work and literature review performed by ATA/TRI concerning the GCDL.
- 3) Identify candidate organizations to participate in focus groups.
- 4) Formulate focus group process and review with ATA/TRI.
- 5) Schedule and conduct focus groups with representatives of organizations that agreed to participate.
- 6) Document focus group results and prepare study report.

GCDL Background and Experience

The background information in this section is drawn from the ATA/TRI literature review completed prior to conducting focus groups.³ Material provided here was also presented and discussed during each of the focus group sessions so that participants had a common understanding of GCDL issues and experience. For a more thorough treatment of the history and status of graduated drivers license programs, including those applied to commercial drivers licenses, refer to the TRI literature review.

The CDL Program

The Commercial Drivers License (CDL) program, established in 1986, was intended “to help reduce or prevent truck and bus accidents, fatalities, and injuries by requiring drivers to have a single commercial motor vehicle driver’s license and by disqualifying drivers who operate commercial motor vehicles in an unsafe manner.”⁴

A 1994 survey by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) reports that a majority of traffic officials and law-enforcement offices are pleased with the results of the CDL. FHWA concurs that the CDL program has been successful but may be in need of enhancement.⁵

Rationale for a Graduated Commercial Drivers License

The reasons for considering graduated licensing for commercial drivers vary, depending on the perspective of the audience questioned. The two most common issues are (1) highway safety and (2) the commercial driver labor pool.

From the perspective of highway safety, some believe that a graduated driver’s license might reduce crashes involving commercial vehicles by ensuring that drivers have more training, experience, and knowledge of specific equipment before being allowed to operate independently. This perspective is predicated on the following findings:⁶

- The driver component is key in the vast majority of crashes.
- Younger, less experienced drivers are overinvolved in traffic crashes for truck drivers as well as passenger car drivers.

- Young drivers have two major causes of crash risk: inexperience and the tendency to engage in high risk behavior.

Some believe that a graduated CDL can provide young or new drivers with experience under controlled circumstances and offer more gradual exposure to risk, resulting in fewer crashes due to driver inexperience.

Others acknowledge the need for improved safety but do not want to restrict entry into a labor market that some view as tight already. The declining supply of and growing demand for drivers leads this part of the trucking industry to favor a graduated CDL if it allows them to introduce younger drivers into the workforce. Some argue that, since many states permit drivers under 21 years old to operate *intrastate* commercial vehicles, these younger drivers, given proper training, could qualify for a GCDL.

Typical Approaches to Drivers Licensing

Different systems for issuing drivers licenses have evolved as states seek to ensure that drivers are well-trained and sufficiently motivated to drive safely. These systems can be grouped into the following categories:⁷

- **Conventional:** treats new drivers the same as other drivers.
- **Probationary/Provisional:** treats new drivers more strictly than other drivers through tighter suspension rules.
- **Graduated:** a systematic, step-wise approach to full licensing status.

The Graduated CDL

What is it?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) describes the concept of a graduated driver's license as "a system designed to ease beginning drivers into the traffic environment under controlled exposure to progressively more difficult driving experiences."⁸

How does it work?

The graduated driver's license helps improve the driving skills of novice drivers and helps them acquire on-the-road experience under less risky conditions by progressing, or graduating, through driver licensing stages before unrestricted licensure.

NHTSA's Recommend GDL Components

NHTSA studies affirm that a graduated licensing system can reduce the crash rate of young inexperienced drivers and recommends the following components be considered in a graduated licensing system for young drivers of *light-duty* vehicles:⁹

- Completion of learner's permit phase
- Supervised driving
- Nighttime driving restrictions
- Second level driver education
- Rapid driver improvement actions for violations
- Mandatory safety belt usage and passenger limitations
- Zero blood alcohol concentration
- Demonstrated safe driving performance
- Issuance of a provisional license to all drivers under 21.

Focus Group Characteristics and Process

Focus Groups Characteristics

The focus groups selected for this study span the range of perspectives on commercial vehicle operations and regulations. They include commercial vehicle, motor coach, and bus drivers; commercial fleet safety officers; state agencies responsible for commercial vehicle safety enforcement; commercial vehicle owner/operators; commercial vehicle insurance agency representatives, commercial vehicle driver training organizations, and state motor vehicle administrators. Specific focus groups are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Focus Group Dates, Locations, and Formats

<i>Focus Group</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Format</i>
1. American Bus Association Drivers Competition	6/25/98	Nashville	Meeting
2. American Bus Association Safety Directors	6/25/98	Nashville	Meeting
3. National Private Truck Council Safety Committee	6/29/98	Alexandria	Meeting
4. Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Driver Cmte	9/29/98	Rochester	Meeting
5. Owner Operator Independent Driver Assoc. Board	10/9/98	Kansas City	Meeting
6. Pennsylvania Transit Safety Professionals	10/15/98	State College	Meeting
7. Commercial Vehicle Training Assoc. Safety Cmte	10/24/98	New Orleans	Meeting
8. American Trucking Assoc. "Road Team" Drivers	10/24/98	New Orleans	Meeting
9. Motor Carrier Insurance Co. Representatives	1/4/99	N/A	Telcon
10. Am. Assoc. of Motor Veh. Admin. DL Cmte	1/11/99	N/A	Telcon

The number of participants in each focus group varied, ranging from five participants in one teleconference to thirty participants in the largest focus group. Figure 1 shows the number of participants in each of the focus groups. Note that the focus groups provide a reasonable balance of drivers, state agency personnel, trainers, and fleet safety directors.

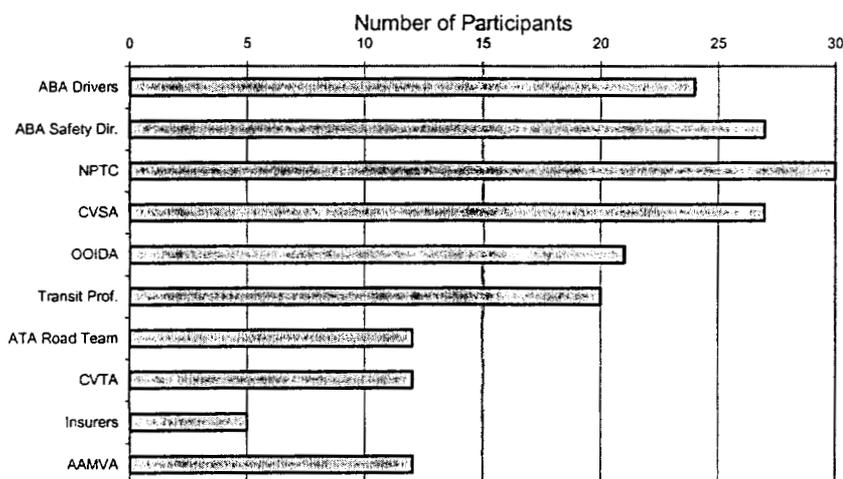


Figure 1. Number of Participants in Each Focus Group

Focus Group Process

With a few exceptions, each focus group was conducted in exactly the same way. Exceptions were made with two focus groups that had already given this topic significant consideration and did not need the preliminary information provided to other groups. These two groups, the Commercial Vehicle Training Association (CVTA) and the representatives from AAMVA's Drivers License Committee moved directly into discussion of the merits of a GCDL based on their previous efforts on the topic. Their responses are factored into the results provided later in this report.

The focus group process employed a series of briefing slides (see Appendix A) and proceeded as follows:

- 1) Review GCDL background briefing with focus group participants and facilitate discussion to ensure clarity and understanding.
- 2) Ask participants to respond individually to the following question:
"What are the primary factors (requirements, restrictions, conditions) that should be considered for a graduated commercial drivers license?"
- 3) Record individual responses on flip charts, clarify responses, and eliminate or combine duplicate responses.
- 4) Ask each participant to select his or her top four or five (depending on the number of factors listed) responses from the consolidated list shown on flip charts and determine which responses receive the most votes.
- 5) Ask each participant to review the prioritized list and answer the following question on response sheets provided, focusing on those factors that emerged as most important:
What are reasonable levels of these factors and when should full licensure be granted?
- 6) Ask each participant to respond to the following questions on the response sheets provided:
How do you feel about a GCDL that permits drivers under 21 to operate commercial vehicles in interstate commerce?
How do you feel about a GCDL that further restricts the current CDL?
Do you think a GCDL is needed? Why or why not?
- 7) Offer each participant an opportunity to give an overall statement about the focus group process and the GCDL concept.

Priority Factors to be Considered in a GCDL

After explaining the focus group objectives and providing GCDL background, focus group participants were asked to respond individually to the first question:

"What are the primary factors (requirements, restrictions, conditions) that should be considered for a graduated commercial drivers license?"

Participants each wrote down their responses before discussion began. The facilitator made several rounds, asking each participant to give the most important factor remaining on her or his list and recorded these responses on flip charts. After recording, clarifying, and, as appropriate, combining items to finalize the list, respondents indicated which items they

judged as “most important” to a graduated commercial drivers license. Appendix B contains the entire list of responses, list in order of decreasing importance to the group based on the way votes were cast. In case of ties, items are listed in the order they were given by the participants.

Each of the factors listed was seen as relevant by one or more participants in the focus groups and is included in Appendix B to show the full range of responses. Those that participants saw as most important are listed in Table 2 which shows only factors that were among the top five in a focus group or received at least 10% of the votes cast.

Table 2. Top GCDL Factors

% Votes	GCDL Factor
Focus Group: American Bus Association Drivers	
21%	Standard training program
21%	Proper training for enforcement and licensing officers
18%	Follow-up training
15%	“Mind Set” training
12%	More rigorous CDL testing
Focus Group: American Bus Association Safety Directors	
46%	Driving Experience (years, geographical, CDL driving experience)
41%	Training/testing
7%	Driving Record
5%	Age
Focus Group: National Private Truck Council Safety Committee	
17%	Structured apprentice program
17%	Clean driving record
17%	Experience
13%	On-road training with qualified trainer
6%	Cargo type (HAZMAT)
Focus Group: Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Driver Committee	
15%	Training in a “controlled” program
10%	Age
10%	Cargo restrictions
10%	Periodic review/continuing education
8%	Geography
Focus Group: Owner Operator Independent Driver Board	
12%	Mandatory entry level training including real-life experience
11%	Training by qualified trainers (miles/years experience)
10%	Quality pay for drivers and trainers
10%	Training schools certified to national standards
10%	Common Sense (decision making skills/personal pride)
9%	Age ¹⁰
Focus Group: ATA Road Team	
19%	Age
18%	Driver record
17%	Training
8%	Knowledge and driving skills
7%	Time of day
Focus Group: Commercial Vehicle Training Association Board	
27%	Training
11%	Age
9%	Driving history
9%	Required formal training
9%	On-the-job training
9%	Uniform testing
Focus Group: Motor Carrier Insurers	
20%	Number of accidents/violations
20%	No hazmat
20%	Successful completion of approved driver training

% Votes	GCDL Factor
16%	On the road training/on the road evaluation
12%	Zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol
Focus Group: Transit Safety Professionals	
20%	Driving Record
19%	Training
15%	Age
12%	Vehicle size
12%	Experience
11%	Periodic retesting
10%	Driving Environment

This list of potential GCDL factors covers a range of topics that reflecting the experience, interests, concerns, and responsibilities of the participants. Many of the topics overlap with different focus groups emphasizing different aspects. In the section that follows, these responses are organized into major categories that shed greater light on commonalities and differences.

Commonalities and Differences Among Focus Groups

Many of the topics in Appendix B and Table 2 are similar across the nine focus. Table 3 shows how the factors in Table 2 map into six major categories that account for approximately 75% of all the votes cast. These six categories capture all but two of the factors listed in Table 2.¹¹ Factors classified under the heading "Restrictions" include any factors that would limit the types of cargo or equipment allowed or the driving conditions (e.g., daylight, terrain, weather) and the specific type of restriction suggested is shown in the table. The numbers in each cell of Table 3 correspond to the order of each factor listed for a focus group in Table 2. For example, the top four factors obtained from the ABA Drivers focus group all addressed driver training issues.

Table 3. Summary of Factors Assigned by Focus Groups

GCDL Focus Group	Training	Driving Record	Driving Experience	Restrictions	Age	Testing
ABA Drivers	1,2,3,4					5
ABA Safety Directors	2	3	1		4	2
NPTC Safety Committee	1,4	2	3	Hazmat(5)		
CVSA Driver Committee	1,4			Cargo(3) Terrain(5)	2	
OOIDA Board	1,2,3,4				5	
ATA Road Team	3,4	2		Time of Day(5)	1	
CVTA Board	1,4,5	3			2	6
Motor Carrier Insurers	3	1,5		Hazmat(2)		3
Transit Safety Professionals	2	1	4	Vehicle(4) Environment(6)	3	5

As shown in Table 3, every focus group saw training as one of the most important factors in issuing a commercial drivers license and, if a *graduated* CDL is to be developed, training (classroom and over-the-road) should be a key component. The other five categories include factors ranked high by some groups and lower by others. Table 4 shows the relative importance of each of these categories of factors. The bottom row of Table 4 shows the sum of the percentages of votes cast for factors that fall into each category. Clearly, training is the dominant category, receiving nearly half of all votes cast and over three times as many votes as any other category.

The driving record of potential GCDL holders is the second most important category to consider in issuing a GCDL. Experience, certain types of restrictions, and age scored nearly the same. More rigorous and credible testing completed the top categories of factors to be considered for a GCDL.

Because the "Training" category proved to be of such great importance to all of the focus groups, it merits more detailed analysis. Some of the phrases used with factors that fell among the "top five or 10%" that were grouped under training are:

- Formal, standard, controlled, approved, certified training
- Over-the-road, on-the-job, real-life experiences, structured apprenticeships
- Qualified trainers with driving experience
- Follow-up, periodic, continuing training
- Training for enforcement and licensing officials

Taken together, these highly ranked training-related factors indicate the importance of credible training programs that meet national criteria, which include realistic driving experience, and are delivered by competent trainers. *If any GCDL concept is put forward, this is the key factor in its acceptance and success.*

Table 4. Summary of Focus Group Votes for Most Important Factors

<i>Group</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Driving Record</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Restrictions</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Testing</i>	<i>Grand Total¹²</i>
American Bus Association Drivers	75%					12%	87%
American Bus Association Safety Directors	41%	7%	46%		5%		99%
ATA Road Team	25%	18%		7%	19%		69%
Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Driver Committee	25%			18%	10%		53%
Commercial Vehicle Training Association Board	45%	9%			11%	9%	74%
Motor Carrier Insurers	36%	32%		20%			88%
National Private Truck Council Safety Committee	30%	17%	17%	6%			70%
Owner Operator Independent Driver Board	33%				9%		42%
Pennsylvania Transit Safety Professionals	19%	20%	12%	22%	15%	11%	99%
Average % of Total Votes Cast	37%	11%	8%	8%	8%	4%	76%

As mentioned under GCDL Background, age is of particular interest because some motor carriers see the GCDL as a way to introduce younger drivers into the workforce in a way that will not jeopardize highway safety. The results of this survey are ambiguous since factors related to age did not consistently emerge as the top factors. Six of the nine focus groups ranked age among their most important factors but, in most cases, received considerably fewer votes that did factors related to training. Participants in several focus groups saw age as important but also felt that proper training is more important than the driver's age.

GCDL Factor Threshold Values

The second question asked of each of the focus groups was:

What are reasonable levels of these factors and when should full licensure be granted?

In answering this question, focus group participants were instructed to consider the entire list of factors that emerged from the first question. Using a template provide, each participant listed up to five factors from those listed that he or she felt were most important. For the factors selected, each participant gave some indication of the requirement or "threshold" for receiving a GCDL. The factors selected were consistent with those shown in Table 4. Figure 2 shows the number of times factors were mentioned by focus group participants. Again, training was by far the most frequent factor listed with age, driving record, driving restrictions, and driving experience. The "Other Factors" category includes many items either unrelated to GCDL implementation or unlikely to be incorporated into a GCDL program (e.g., compensation levels, applicant's attitude or personality). The category "Skill/Knowledge/Education" is related to Training but is more oriented toward the GCDL applicant's education level and basic skills (e.g., English language proficiency).

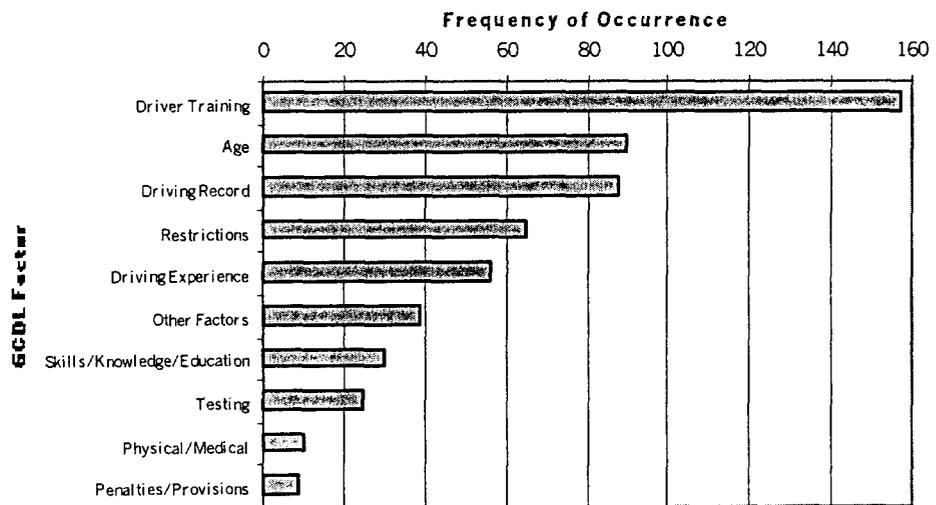


Figure 2 Frequency of Occurrence for GCDL Factors

Training

The "Training" category contained comments similar to the items listed previously (e.g., formal, approved training; on-the-road, apprenticeship programs; and training for enforcement officers). However, the item of greatest interest to the GCDL discussion is the length of

training that participants felt should be required under the GCDL. Relatively few of the participants gave a specific length of the training period they felt should be required under a GCDL but for the 30 participants that did recommend a minimum training period, the average recommended training was 20 weeks. Figure 3 shows the responses of those who gave a minimum training requirement. Note that approximately two-thirds of the responses recommended three months or less training for the GCDL.

In addition to the duration of training, many respondents suggested a progressive training program that includes on-the-road training that begins with straight trucks and progresses to increasingly more difficult driving conditions and more complex equipment and loads. Many respondents also recommended a period of supervised driving or an apprenticeship during which the new driver would be under the supervision of an experienced driver who would eventually evaluate the new driver's ability to operate a commercial vehicle independently. Finally, respondents recommended periodic retesting and continuing training, especially for new drivers.

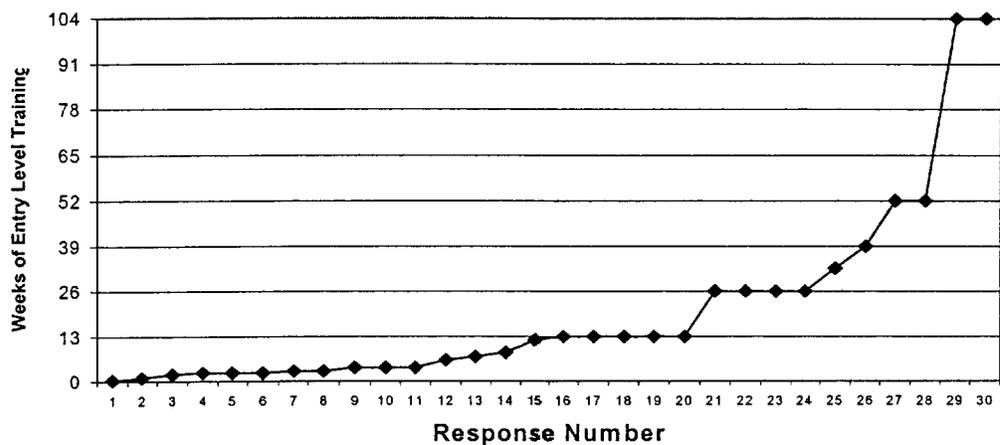


Figure 3. Recommended Weeks of Entry Level Training for GCDL Recipients

Illustrative comments from participants regarding commercial driver training:

- "Graduate of a certified training program or six months of co-driving under supervision."
- "Require that all trainees have classroom instruction (80 hrs.) before actual driving tractor/trailer instruction, actual driving technique (250 hrs.) instruction."
- "After company training and 1 month on the road with that company, back to the school for retraining and testing."
- "Accredited course completion within past 18 months including at least 40 hours behind the wheel."
- "Instructors should be trained and tested on their skills (driving, rules of the road, and instructional skills) every couple of years."
- "Today's environment and traffic and good rules now mandate some kind of real-life mandatory training."

Age

One of the primary motivations for implementing a GCDL is to provide mechanisms that might enable younger drivers to enter the commercial vehicle driver workforce. As shown in Figure 2, many respondents offered comments on the age at which an individual might be eligible for a GCDL. Not all respondents recommended specific minimum ages for the GCDL but for the 85 participants who did recommend a specific age, the overall average recommended age is 19.5 years, about 18 months younger than is currently required for an interstate CDL. The distribution of responses is shown in Figure 4. Note the bi-modal nature of this distribution with about 40% of respondents favoring the 18 year old minimum and another 40% favoring a 21 year old minimum for the GCDL. Some respondents were open to offering provisional licenses to drivers as young as 15 years old (as is the case for private vehicle licenses in many states); others wanted the entry level driving age raised to as high as 25 years old. However, over 88% of the responses fell between 18 and 21 years of age. As the selected comments illustrate, most respondents suggested conditions under which the graduated commercial drivers license would be issued.

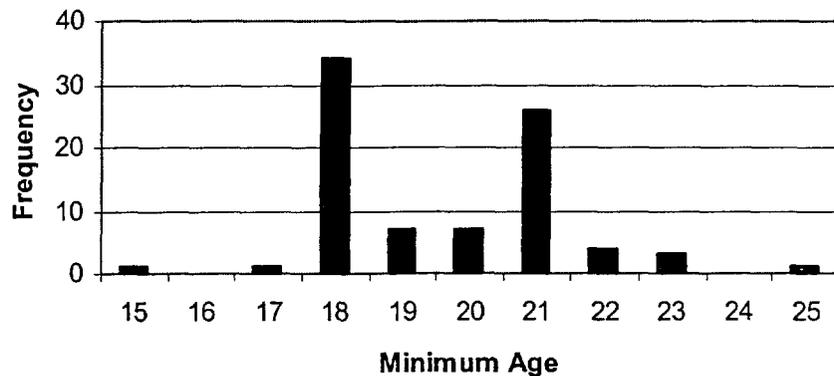


Figure 4. Distribution of Responses Concerning Minimum Age for GCDL

Illustrative comments from participants regarding age:

- "18 should be the minimum age to start a CDL with proper restrictions in place."
- "May begin at 18, but 21 is point at which a full CDL may be obtained."
- "Don't know what magic number is. Many mature and capable 18 year olds and many immature, incapable 25-26 year olds."
- "Start with age 18 provided that: a) person has been driving since age 16, b) graduates from an approved training program, c) has had no accidents."
- "At least 18 years of age obtain learner's permit or intrastate license. Operate solely within the state issuing license for one year under supervision combined with number of classroom hours."
- "Age 17-18 for straight truck interstate to interstate, semi's at age 21."
- "Age 19 restricted - 21 full authority allowed based on experience."

Driving Record

The third greatest number of comments (behind training and age) were made about an applicants driving record and related behavior. Although this area does not lend itself to

quantification as easily as training and age, the comments made about the applicants driving record give insight into what participants believe qualifies the applicant for a graduated commercial drivers license. The responses addressed the applicants record in the following four areas:

- Motor vehicle accident history
- Traffic violations and citations
- Drug and alcohol use
- Reckless driving citations

Respondents differed somewhat in the *number* of violations, citations, or accidents that would be tolerated but acknowledged that they should be considered in the process of issuing a graduated CDL. Most participants agreed that any evidence of alcohol or drug abuse (e.g., a DUI/DWI conviction) is sufficient ground for denying a graduated CDL.

Illustrative comments from participants regarding driving record:

- "To obtain: No moving violations for 1 year to drive intrastate - No chargeable accidents. No moving violations for 2 years to drive intrastate - No chargeable accidents."
- "1) Max. 6 points from state. 2) No drug/alcohol or serious convictions."
- "Clean for 2 years with no preventable accidents or speeding and reckless tickets issued."
- "No issue of GCDL with 3 accidents within 2 years. 2 tickets convictions within 2 years."
- "No major traffic offenses. No more than one moving violation in the past two years."
- "No accidents, no speeding violations, no suspensions."

Restrictions

The fourth most commonly mentioned factors deal with the range of restrictions that might be imposed on the recipient of a graduated CDL. Restrictions are designed to moderate the risk exposure a newly licensed GCDL driver faces. Participants mentioned a variety of restrictions, including:

- hours of service
- type of equipment
- terrain or geography
- weather conditions
- road conditions
- cargo characteristics
- passengers
- time of day (daylight hours)

Participants considered restricting newly licensed drivers based on one or more of these factors so that GCDL holders would experience the risk of commercial vehicle operation under more controlled conditions.

Illustrative comments from participants regarding driver restrictions:

- “Cargo - No hazmat until 23 years old and/or 2 years experience.”
- “Day light limited hours.”
- “10,000 safe miles driven in your home state before nationwide driving.”
- “Should log miles in Mountain States before obtaining CDL.”
- “Day only for 2 years. Day/Night for 1 year. Hours of Service in increasing stages.”
- “Start with small straight truck - minimum 6 months or 1 year on trailer/trailer semi.”

Driving Experience

The fifth most commonly mentioned factor is driving experience. This factor differs from “driving record” in that it concerns the type and quantity of experience the prospective driver has, regardless of accident or violation record. Again, participants typically suggested a required level of experience, but this required experience varied from modest experience (e.g., 6 months) to substantial experience (e.g., 2 years).

Illustrative comments from participants regarding driving experience:

- “Should have full operators license for 2-4 years before moving to next vehicle class/for hire license (CDL).”
- “Need to exhibit general knowledge and capability of how to operate a vehicle safely under varying conditions - city, rural, highway, day, night, adverse weather.”
- “At least 2 years experience driving anything with a valid license.”
- “Passenger vehicle auto license for 1 year minimum with clean driving record.”
- “Experience as a license driver is more important than age. Minimum 5 years driving any vehicle to be considered for CDL process.”
- “Must have regularly been driving a personal vehicle for the last 2 years.”
- “3 years with regular license to go interstate. 1 year with regular license to go intrastate.”

Testing

While testing was less frequently mentioned in comments, it was one of the factors judged to be an important consideration in issuing a graduated CDL. The many of the comments related to testing cited the need for periodic re-testing to ensure that driving skills are mastered and that drivers maintain their skill level, especially during the early portion of their driving careers. Additionally, participants saw the need for realistic testing under a variety of

driving conditions. Several participants commented on the need to ensure that third party testing be properly monitored to ensure that it meets the testing requirements of the cognizant state agencies.

Illustrative comments from participants regarding driving testing:

- "After another 6 months to a year on the road, back to school for one last test."
- "Must be proficient in FMSCR and local laws (book knowledge) as well as road skills (road test)."
- "More road testing, such as city, county, mountain driving, day, night, rain."
- "During GDL, must undergo quarterly reviews for duration of GDL."

Is a GCDL Needed?

Focus Group Results

After identifying, discussing, and prioritizing factors that should be considered in developing a GCDL, participants were asked three specific questions about implementing a GCDL. The first question concerned the availability of a GCDL for younger drivers. Specifically, participants were asked:

How do you feel about a GCDL that permits drivers under 21 to operate commercial vehicles in interstate commerce?

Table 5 shows summary results of responses to this question. Note that three groups (CVSA, NPTC, and motor carrier insurers) had a majority of the participants favoring a GCDL that would permit drivers under 21 to permit commercial vehicles in interstate commerce. Groups representing drivers (truck or motor coach) viewed a GCDL which included drivers under 21 much more skeptically.

Table 5. A GCDL for Drivers Under 21

Source	Oppose	Favor ³	Uncommitted
American Bus Association Drivers	50%	29%	21%
American Bus Association Safety Directors	52%	48%	0%
ATA Road Team	55%	36%	9%
CVSA Driver Committee	41%	59%	0%
NPTC Safety Committee	30%	67%	3%
OOIDA Board	76%	19%	5%
PA Transit Safety Professionals	63%	37%	0%
Motor Carrier Insurers	0%	75%	25%
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>49%</i>	<i>45%</i>	<i>6%</i>

The second question asked of participants was:

How do you feel about a GCDL that further restricts the current CDL?

This question was designed primarily to determine if respondents felt that a GCDL was needed to improve highway safety through a more rigorous licensing program, even if it

means that new requirements for an unrestricted CDL are added (e.g., approved training, supervised driving experience). Responses to this question are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. A More Restrictive GCDL

Source	Oppose	Favor	Uncommitted
American Bus Association Drivers	54%	29%	17%
American Bus Association Safety Directors	52%	26%	22%
ATA Road Team	18%	64%	18%
CVSA Driver Committee	19%	56%	26%
NPTC Safety Committee	13%	73%	13%
OOIDA Board	14%	62%	24%
PA Transit Safety Professionals	40%	50%	10%
Motor Carrier Insurers	0%	100%	0%
<i>Grand Total</i>	29%	53%	18%

Participants were also asked if they felt a GCDL is needed, regardless of age restrictions. Specifically,

Do you think a GCDL is needed? Why or why not?

Responses to this question are summarized in Table 7. Note that a majority of participants favor the GCDL, primarily because it is viewed as a way to remove unsafe commercial vehicle operators from the highway. Interestingly, the motor coach industry representatives (drivers and safety directors) indicated relatively strong opposition to the overall concept. This may be because most motor coaches are operated by a driver who is also responsible for passengers onboard.

Table 7. Overall Attitude toward a GCDL

Source	Oppose	Favor	Uncommitted
American Bus Association Drivers	67%	33%	0%
American Bus Association Safety Directors	61%	39%	0%
ATA Road Team	18%	73%	9%
CVSA Driver Committee	15%	70%	15%
NPTC Safety Committee	7%	83%	10%
OOIDA Board ¹⁴	38%	62%	0%
PA Transit Safety Professionals	45%	40%	15%
Motor Carrier Insurers	0%	100%	0%
<i>Grand Total</i>	34%	59%	7%

Two of the focus groups are not included in Tables 5, 6, and 7 – the CVTA Board and the AAMVA Drivers License Committee members. These groups provide their input through open discussion rather than by responding to specific questions. Recommendations from these two focus groups are summarized below.

Commercial Vehicle Training Association Focus Group Recommendations

The focus group with the Commercial Vehicle Training Association (CVTA) Board of Directors did not follow the same model as other focus groups since CVTA had already spent considerable time discussing and debating the many issues that surround the GCDL. After considerable discussion, CVTA Board came to consensus around a process for obtaining

and retaining a commercial drivers license. The process begins with prerequisites for entering a training program to become a commercially licensed drivers and continues through a periodic review and re-certification process to ensure that driving skills are maintained throughout the drivers career. This process, to the extent defined during this session, is as described below.

1) Prerequisites for entering CDL training:

- (a) 18 years old
- (b) Minimum one year passenger driver's license
- (c) High school diploma or GED or "ability to benefit" (DofED)
- (d) Meet all existing DOT requirements

2) Formal Commercial Driver Training:

- (a) Meet or exceed national standards (e.g., PTDIA)
- (b) Obtain "National Instructional Permit" (NIP) with interstate reciprocity.

3) On-the-Job Training (Post-school) – Externships:

- (a) Obtain "OJT Permit" (NIP + certification = OJT Permit) (Temporary/Conditional)
- (b) Driver/Training in vehicle (awake and observing)
- (c) Minimum four weeks (or equivalent miles/hours/job experience)
- (d) Driver/Trainer sign-off
- (e) "Serious" violation during OJT = as defined for permanent CDL

4) Post OJT:

- (a) Initial one year CDL; retest for five year CDL

5) Continuing Education:

- (a) [TBD – The group acknowledged the need for continuing education but did not describe the requirement during the focus group session.]

6) Periodic Re-Evaluation:

- (a) [TBD – The group acknowledged the need for periodic re-evaluation but did not describe the requirement during the focus group session.]

AAMVA Focus Group Comments

As with the CVTA focus group, AAMVA participants had previously considered the graduated commercial drivers license and many were from states that were already issuing graduated drivers license for young passenger car drivers. The AAMVA focus group was conducted via teleconference and did not lend itself to the more rigorous process used in other focus groups. The comments that follow summarize the ideas and concerns of this group:

- The cost of administering a GDL (passenger or commercial) are high – for staff, systems, etc. Consequently, there must be a safety payoff for states to favor such investments
- The maturity of the driver is an important component of driver safety. Past discussion resulted in establishing the age of 21 as appropriate for interstate drivers, although data are not readily available to validate safety performance as a function of driver age.
- If working conditions (pay, hours away from home, etc.) discourage individuals from entering the commercial driver labor pool, will a GCDL that enables drivers under 21 to

operate interstate vehicles overcome the problem and increase the labor pool significantly?

- Instructional permits provide some of the same features that might be available under GCDLs and, if properly administered, could accomplish the same objective of ensuring that drivers with full CDLs are properly trained and tested. One suggestion is that a driver with a CDL instructional permit be allowed to operate interstate vehicles under the supervision of a fully licensed driver (in some states, this already occurs – supervising driver must be at least 25).

The three “bottom line” suggestions agreed to by most (perhaps all) participants were:

1. National training standards and requirements are needed to ensure that all drivers who are issued CDLs have adequate and consistent training regardless of which state issues the CDL.
2. Drivers with less than one year of experience should be subjected to more stringent penalties or restrictions when they are involved in violations or accidents.
3. Driver testing must be adequate, whether performed by state agencies or third party testing organizations. Additionally, state agencies must ensure that third party testers perform drivers tests appropriately.

Closing comments from AAMVA participants were:

- Not opposed to GCDL; greater concern with how drivers are tested; currently evaluating 3rd party testing and may go to off-site testing by state agency; interested in learning more about GCDL and how it would operate.
- Not ruling GCDL out; have not seen statistics that young drivers are causing accidents; need national criteria for a GCDL to ensure uniformity; concerned that 18 year old may be able to operate vehicle but may not be mature enough to send over-the-road with over night trips; open to GCDL but need to see statistics to justify investment; many trucking companies need drivers and if GCDL can help, it should be considered; would like to get accident statistics by age and miles driven to compare accident frequency for different age groups.
- Need measurement approach to compare current CDL approach to alternatives (e.g., GCDL) so we can know their impact on safety; support the need for standard training program; the restricted permit could be best approach to GCDL; question to value of 3rd party testing – need to look at cost and benefits on drivers license function due to the complexity of the program.
- Training is major component; may need one-year restriction on new drivers – carriers should restrict drivers to one years experience before giving them full responsibility and privileges; need national system that is consistent from state to state with same components in every state; if industry is in need of drivers, industry should launch major campaign to recruit young drivers.
- Additional restrictions on entry into the commercial driver workforce should come from industry based on their training requirements, not from additional requirements to obtain a CDL.; could allow 18 year old with intrastate CDL to be permitted (e.g., as under instructional permit) for interstate driving.

- The solution several years back led to issuing licenses to 18-19 year olds for intrastate driving; industry may need to make changes to make jobs more attractive; need early intervention with young violators (e.g., stiff penalties, traffic school, etc.)

Recommendations for Graduated CDL Survey

The primary objective of this effort was to identify factors that are most important in a graduated drivers license program and to use this information to develop a national survey to determine government and industry attitudes toward a GCDL and how a graduated commercial drivers license should program might be implemented.

Issues to be Addressed

A draft GCDL Survey is provided in Appendix C. The questions contained in the draft survey address the issues that must be addressed in the larger survey of the commercial vehicle community based on the most important factors identified in the focus group process. The questions illustrate what should be in the survey but the actual format and language to be used in survey questions will be developed after agreement is achieved on the areas to be explored through the questions and the method selected for distributing survey instruments and collecting survey responses.

Population to be Surveyed

The organizations that participated in this study are representative of those who should be included in a national survey to determine if and how a graduated CDL should be implemented. The survey population should include:

- drivers (truck, bus, and motor coach),
- fleet operations managers,
- commercial vehicle owner/operators,
- fleet safety managers,
- motor carrier insurers,
- commercial vehicle safety enforcement agency personnel,
- state traffic safety officers (highway patrol or state police),
- state drivers licensing agency managers, and
- commercial vehicle driver training organizations

In some cases, surveys of these populations can be administered through industry or professional associations that can distribute surveys to and collect surveys from their membership; in other cases, random sampling methods can be used to select from populations less likely to be represented by national or state associations.

Suggested Format

The survey format depends on the size of the survey (number of people or organizations to be surveyed) and the length and complexity of the survey instrument. Several different formats should be considered and a final selection made after considering the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Approaches that should be considered are:

- Traditional mail survey with self-addressed stamped envelop for survey return
- Mail survey with "fax back" instructions

- Trade/industry magazine survey printed in a variety of magazines with either fax or mail return
- Telephone interviews with randomly selected members of the target population
- Internet-based survey either emailed to identified respondents or posted (or linked) to web pages frequently visited by the target populations
- Combinations of several different approaches designed to maximize response to the survey.

Next Steps in the GCDL Study

The results of this study provide the basis for pursuing the GCDL concept to the next stage. The survey to follow this study is designed primarily to refine the assessment of industry and agency acceptance of a GCDL and to establish the parameters that will guide GCDL implementation if it is found to be of sufficient value to public safety and to increasing the pool of qualified commercial vehicle operators.

In addition to preparing and administering the survey described briefly in the previous section, some attention must be given to three other aspects of GDCL design and implementation: (1) what measurable evidence exists that indicates that safety will improve if new drivers are required (or permitted) to obtain a graduated CDL prior to obtaining an unrestricted CDL, (2) to what extent is the pool of qualified drivers likely to expand if a CDL with some restrictions (i.e., a GCDL) is available for drivers under the age of 21, and (3) what additional burden will be placed on state drivers' license agencies and state motor carrier enforcement personnel who will be tasked with enforcing any laws regarding issuance of and compliance with rules pertaining to a GCDL. These issues were not specifically part of this study but they must be addressed before federal and state agencies should be asked to invest in GCDL implementation.

Appendix A. Focus Group Presentation

Graduated Commercial Drivers License

Focus Group Overview

12/10/98

1

Focus Group Purpose

- ◆ To learn participants' attitudes toward the concept of a graduated commercial drivers license (GCDL) and their willingness to accept it.
- ◆ To identify alternative GCDL implementation scenarios to be used later in a mail survey of all affected groups.

12/10/98

2

Focus Group Process

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Time</i>
1. Introductions and Overview	5 min
2. Focus Group Objectives and Process	5 min
3. Graduated CDL Research Background and Issues	10 min
4. Requirements, Restrictions, Conditions for Graduated CDL	30 min
5. Boundary Conditions for Graduated CDL	30 min
6. Other Comments and Concerns	30 min

12/10/98

3

GCDL Research Background

- ◆ The CDL program, established in 1986, was intended “to help reduce or prevent truck and bus accidents, fatalities, and injuries by requiring drivers to have a single commercial motor vehicle driver’s license and by disqualifying drivers who operate commercial motor vehicles in an unsafe manner.”
- ◆ Majority of traffic officials and law-enforcement offices are pleased with the results of the CDL.
- ◆ FHWA concurs that CDL has been successful but may be in need of enhancement.

12/10/98

4

GCDL Research Background (cont'd)

- ◆ Driver component is key in the vast majority of crashes.
- ◆ Younger, less experienced drivers are overinvolved in traffic crashes for truck drivers as well as passenger car drivers.
- ◆ Young drivers have two major causes of crash risk: inexperience and the tendency to engage in high risk behavior.
- ◆ Declining supply of and growing demand for drivers leads parts of trucking industry to favor graduated CDL if it allows them to introduce younger drivers.

12/10/98

5

Approaches to Licensing

- ◆ **Conventional:** treats new drivers the same as other drivers.
- ◆ **Probationary/Provisional:** treats new drivers more strictly than other drivers through tighter suspension rules.
- ◆ **Graduated:** a systematic, step-wise approach to full licensing status.

12/10/98

6

The Graduated CDL

- ◆ What is it?

- "A system designed to ease beginning drivers into the traffic environment under controlled exposure to progressively more difficult driving experiences."
- How does it work?
- "This system helps improve their driving skills and helps them acquire on-the-road experience under less risky conditions by progressing, or graduating, through driver licensing stages before unrestricted licensure."

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NHTSA's Recommend GDL Components

- ◆ Completion of learner's permit phase
- ◆ Supervised driving
- ◆ Nighttime driving restrictions
- ◆ Second level driver education
- ◆ Rapid driver improvement actions for violations
- ◆ Mandatory safety belt usage and passenger limitations
- ◆ Zero blood alcohol concentration
- ◆ Demonstrated safe driving performance
- ◆ Issuance of a provisional license to all drivers under 21.

12/10/98

8

Question #1

What are the primary factors (requirements, restrictions, conditions) that should be considered for a graduated commercial drivers license?

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Question #2

What are reasonable levels of these factors and when should full licensure be granted?

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Years of experience
- ◆ Specific experience
- ◆ Number of accidents/violations
- ◆ Hours of training/courses completed
- ◆ etc.

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Other Comments and Concerns

- ◆ How do you feel about a GCDL that permits drivers under 21 to operate commercial vehicles in interstate commerce?
- ◆ How do you feel about a GCDL that further restricts the current CDL?
- ◆ Do you think a GCDL is needed? Why or why not?

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Appendix B. GCDL Factors By Focus Group¹⁵

% Votes	GCDL Factor
Focus Group: American Bus Association Drivers	
21%	Standard training program
21%	Proper training for enforcement and licensing officers
18%	Follow-up training
15%	"Mind Set" training
12%	More rigorous CDL testing
5%	Age
5%	Road test before hire
1%	Equipment characteristics training
1%	Weekly hours of service restriction
1%	Sign-off authority
0%	Local service operation
0%	Training for seasonal driving (summer/winter)
0%	Six months "prove" time before "graduating"
0%	Experience on varying terrain (mountain/desert)
0%	Uniform training book for all CDL holders
0%	Insurance restrictions
0%	Voluntary restriction on assignments
Focus Group: American Bus Association Safety Directors	
46%	Driving Experience (years, geographical, CDL driving experience)
41%	Training/testing
7%	Driving Record
5%	Age
Focus Group: National Private Truck Council Safety Committee	
17%	Structured apprentice program
17%	Clean driving record
17%	Experience
13%	On-road training with qualified trainer
6%	Cargo type (HAZMAT)
5%	Results of skill tests
4%	Completion of driver training program, including FMCSR
4%	Operating environment
3%	No drug or alcohol convictions on/off job
3%	Size/weight of vehicle
2%	Length of probationary period
2%	Passenger license at least 1 year
2%	Tanker driver
1%	Third party sponsorship/recommendation
1%	English language proficiency
1%	Additional/more stringent skills and knowledge test in process
1%	Mandatory "time out" for violations
1%	Insurance/liability
0%	Experience with different classification in lui of formal training

% Votes	GCDL Factor
0%	Number of classifications
0%	Age of equipment
0%	Hours of service limits
0%	Simulator testing
0%	Time of day
0%	Education level
0%	DOT physical
0%	Personality test/profile
0%	Criminal record
0%	Type trip (distance) from home base
0%	Single/multi-unit vehicle
0%	Pass written CDL Exam
Focus Group: Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Driver Committee	
15%	Training in a "controlled" program
10%	Age
10%	Cargo restrictions
10%	Periodic review/continuing education
8%	Geography
6%	Training by independent "certified" training program
6%	Controlled formal training
4%	Use of drugs (DUI, DWI)
4%	Driving history (accidents/violations)
4%	Nighttime driving restrictions
4%	Education
4%	Weather conditions
4%	Personality
2%	Equipment knowledge
2%	Maturity
2%	Physical condition
2%	Endorsement restriction
0%	Previous employment history
0%	Limited passengers (except trainer)
0%	Arrest record
Focus Group: Owner Operator Independent Driver Board	
12%	Mandatory entry level training including real-life experience
11%	Training by qualified trainers (miles/years experience)
10%	Quality pay for drivers and trainers
10%	Training schools certified to national standards
10%	Common Sense (decision making skills/personal pride)
9%	Age
4%	Minimum driving time under instruction (apprenticeship)
4%	English-speaking (enforcement)
4%	No carrier-provided entry-level training in

% Votes	GCDL Factor
	revenue-producing situation
4%	Trained on specific equipment
4%	Understand obligations to driving public (risk/responsibilities/courtesy)
3%	Minimum requirements/testing to screen out unqualifiable drivers
3%	Mandatory entry level psychological testing
3%	Entry level education of drivers
3%	Insurable by insurance company - not self-insured trucking company
2%	Hold companies responsible for actions of drivers-in-training
2%	Probationary license
2%	Comprehensive Driving Skills (skid control)
2%	Rules and regulations of industry
2%	Restrict to driving in home state
1%	Restricted load type
1%	Restrict to driving range (miles)
0%	Introduce trade schools to HS/College students
0%	Restricted region of operation
0%	Who pays for additional training that might be mandated?
Focus Group: ATA Road Team	
19%	Age
18%	Driver record
17%	Training
8%	Knowledge and driving skills
7%	Time of day
5%	Driving history (experience)
5%	Type of driving experience (equipment)
5%	Medical/physical conditions
3%	Vehicle type
3%	Supervision
2%	Product haul
2%	Testing
2%	Urban/rural
2%	Driver profile
2%	More stringent penalties for violations
1%	Regular schedule
0%	Radius of operations restrictions
0%	Road/weather conditions
0%	Weight of loads
0%	Terrain
Focus Group: Commercial Vehicle Training Association Board	
27%	Training
11%	Age
9%	Driving history
9%	Required formal training
9%	On-the-job training
9%	Uniform testing
5%	Geographical area (terrain)
5%	Driving experience (where, conditions, when)

% Votes	GCDL Factor
5%	Education
5%	Attitudes and goals
2%	Demonstrated knowledge and skill
2%	Cargo type
2%	Language (English)
0%	Experience background
0%	Weather conditions
0%	Urban/rural/remote
0%	Local delivery vs. over-the-road (job function)
0%	Physical requirements (vision, size, disabilities, etc.)
0%	Legal background
0%	Federal GCDL
Focus Group: Motor Carrier Insurers	
20%	Number of accidents/violations
20%	No hazmat
20%	Successful completion of approved driver training
16%	On the road training/on the road evaluation
12%	Zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol
4%	No night driving
4%	Minimum training/supervised driving
4%	Company sponsorship of driver
0%	Age
0%	Years of experience
0%	Experience with specific equipment
0%	Hours of training/courses completed
0%	Experience with vehicles other than cars
0%	Standard for previous driving record
0%	Restriction to automatic transmission
0%	Radius of operations restrictions
0%	50 hour work week
0%	No tankers
0%	Vehicle size restriction
0%	Acceptable criminal background check
Focus Group: Transit Safety Professionals	
20%	Driving Record
19%	Training
15%	Age
12%	Vehicle size
12%	Experience
11%	Periodic retesting
10%	Driving Environment
1%	Supervisory driving

Appendix C. Draft Graduate Commercial Drivers License Survey

Graduated Commercial Drivers License Survey

Conducted by
Federal Highway Administration
Office of Motor Carriers and Highway
Safety

April 1999

Please complete the survey questionnaire that follows and when you have finished, fax your completed survey to _____ at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or mail your survey to _____ in the enclosed envelope. If you have questions or need additional information, please call _____ at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Thank you for your participation in this survey!

Background

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) requires the Federal Highway Administration Office of Motor Carriers and Highway Safety to review the status of the current Commercial Drivers License and to assess the merits of implementing a Graduated Commercial Drivers License (GCDL). This survey is designed to learn attitudes toward a GCDL among commercial vehicle drivers, industry groups, and government agencies involved in commercial vehicle operation, regulation, and enforcement. Further, it will help determine the best way to implement a GCDL if it is found beneficial to motor carrier safety and industry efficiency. The survey incorporates information obtained through a series of focus groups with truck and bus drivers, industry representatives, and enforcement and regulatory agency representatives.

The Graduated CDL

What is it?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) describes the concept of a graduated driver's license as "a system designed to ease beginning drivers into the traffic environment under controlled exposure to progressively more difficult driving experiences.

The graduated driver's license helps improve the driving skills of novice drivers and helps them acquire on-the-road experience under less risky conditions by progressing, or graduating, through driver licensing stages before unrestricted licensure.

The Survey

The questions below address issues found to be important to the commercial vehicle community. Please take a few moments to answer the questions and return the survey as instructed on the cover page. Thank you for your participation.

Information About You

Primary Occupation(s) (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Truck driver | <input type="radio"/> Motor carrier insurance provider |
| <input type="radio"/> Owner-operator | <input type="radio"/> Risk assessment specialist |
| <input type="radio"/> Motor coach/bus driver | <input type="radio"/> Labor union representative |
| <input type="radio"/> Fleet manager/owner | <input type="radio"/> Public interest group |
| <input type="radio"/> Company safety director | <input type="radio"/> Enforcement officer (motor carrier safety) |
| <input type="radio"/> Transit system administrator | <input type="radio"/> Motor vehicle administrator (driver's licenses) |
| <input type="radio"/> Commercial driver trainer | <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ |

Overall Assessment of GCDL

Do you think a Graduated Commercial Driver's License is needed? YES NO

Please explain your response briefly:

Regardless of your response to the previous question, please complete the rest of the survey so that we know your preferences if a GCDL were to be implemented.

Training

- 1) Should issuance of a graduated CDL be linked to enrollment in a commercial driving training program (check one)?

Yes No

- 2) For students to be eligible to receive a graduated CDL while in training, should the curricula of commercial driver training programs meet widely-endorsed standard criteria (check one)?

Yes No

- 3) Approximately how much entry level training and experience should new drivers receive before "graduating" to an unrestricted CDL (Enter number months)?

Minimum Training to receive unrestricted CDL: _____ months

Driving Record

- 1) Should an applicant's past driving record be considered in issuing a graduated commercial drivers license (check one)?

Yes No

- 2) How many of each of the following within the past 12 months should cause an applicant to be *denied* a graduated CDL (write a number in each box)?

Motor vehicle accidents (passenger or light truck)

Traffic violations and citations

DUI/DWI convictions

Reckless driving citations

- 3) Should penalties for drivers holding a graduated CDL who have chargeable accidents or moving violations be more severe than those for drivers with unrestricted CDLs (check one)?

Yes No

Driving Experience

- 1) How much passenger or light truck driving experience should an applicant have before being issued a graduated CDL (Enter number of months)?

Minimum passenger/light truck driving experience: _____ months

Restrictions

- 1) Which of the following restrictions should apply to entry level drivers operating under a graduated CDL (check all that apply)?
 - Reduced hours of service
 - Limitations on equipment type (e.g., multiples, tankers, motor coaches, etc.)
 - Cargo types (e.g., livestock, liquids, HAZMAT)
 - Weather and visibility conditions (e.g., ice, snow, fog, night driving)
 - Geography or terrain features (e.g., mountains)
 - Other: _____
- 2) Should a fully licensed commercial vehicle operator be in the vehicle observing the driver when it is operated by a driver with a graduated CDL (check one)?
 - Yes
 - No

Age

- 1) What is the minimum age at which an applicant should be eligible to receive a *graduated* CDL (enter age)?
Minimum age: _____
- 2) Assuming that training requirements are met, what is the minimum age at which the holder of a graduated CDL should be eligible to "graduate" to an *unrestricted* CDL (enter age)?
Minimum age: _____

Testing

- 1) How much testing (knowledge and road test) should given to graduated CDL holders prior to issuing an unrestricted CDL (check one)?
 - Single test to "graduate" to unrestricted CDL
 - Periodically while holding GCDL until training is complete
 - Initial test plus re-test 1 year after receiving initial GCDL
 - Other: _____

Other Factors

What other factors do you feel must be addressed in a GCDL?

Endnotes

¹ "Survey of Motor Carrier Industry Opinion Pertaining to Graduated Licenses, Task 1: Revised Detailed Work Plan", Submitted to the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Contract No. DTFH-96-X-00022, Work Order No. 7; submitted by the Trucking Research Institute, Alexandria, VA, April 27, 1998. *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ "Survey of Motor Carrier Industry Opinion Pertaining to Graduated Licenses – Task 2 Interim Report, Literature Search," prepared by the Trucking Research Institute for the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, under Contract No. DTFH-96-X-00022, Work Order No. 7, October 16, 1997.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6-7.

¹⁰ "Age" was retained on the OOIDA list since it scored about the same and the next higher and much higher than the next lower factor.

¹¹ Only "Quality of Pay for Drivers and Trainers", and "Common Sense" did not fit into one of these six categories. While these are important factors for attracting and retaining competent drivers, they are not factors that could be integrated into a graduated commercial drivers license system.

¹² The "Grand Total" Column is the total percentage of votes assigned by each group to those factors that fell into one of the six categories in the table. Because the number of factors each focus group considered varied, some focus groups were able to spread their votes over more factors than others. For example the ABA Safety Directors listed only four factors so all of their votes went to their "top five"; conversely, OOIDA Board members listed 22 factors with the top six accounting for 42% of votes and NPTC listed 31 factors with the top five accounting for 70% of votes cast.

¹³ Most "favorable" responses have one or more caveats that indicate the respondents concept of "graduated".

¹⁴ According to a February 1999 *Landline* story, shortly after participating in the GCDL Focus Group, OOIDA Board of Directors members passed a resolution stating that "OOIDA would support no graduated CDL proposal that allows for certification of drivers younger than 21 years of age." The Board did acknowledge, however, that discussion of a GCDL should continue. A survey of OOIDA members reported in this same issue indicated that 88% of the respondents felt that new drivers needed more training, 84% said they felt a GCDL would result in safer entry level drivers, and 82% favored having FHWA implement a graduated CDL program for beginning truck drivers.

¹⁵ No factors are listed for the AAMVA focus group. The AAMVA focus group was held via teleconference and, after brief discussion, the process was revised based on their previous consideration of the GCDL issue. The results of the AAMVA focus group are documented in an appendix to this report.