Platooning

The Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) has implemented a **collaborative, constructive, and expedient process for the authorization of truck platooning in Maryland**. This follows a recent law change and subsequent adopted regulations to lift the statutory prohibition on "following too closely" for electronically connected trucks and remove a barrier to the commercial deployment of driver-assisted truck platoons on Maryland roadways.

What does platooning look like?

This new process allows Maryland to explore driver-assisted truck platooning which could lead to improvements in the areas of safety, environment, commerce, and infrastructure. The pandemic highlighted the importance of trucking and freight delivery, making it even more important to provide every available tool to our trucking companies.

Truck platooning utilizes vehicle-to-vehicle communications technology hosted by radar, GPS, and Wi-Fi to allow two or more vehicles to be electronically synced with one another. The technology used to control truck platoons wirelessly communicates information on braking, speed, and oncoming obstacles, allowing the following trucks to have consistent and predictable driving behavior. The use of these systems drastically reduces the reaction time of the following trucks in a platoon, thereby reducing the likelihood of rear-end or chain-reaction crashes.

Truck platoons are **currently limited to two trucks**, and each truck is required to have a driver who has a valid commercial driver license with appropriate endorsements, has been trained on that specific vehicle's platooning system, and is responsible for care and control of the vehicle they are in. While platooning trucks may follow a little closer than usual, they must still follow all traffic laws and rules of the road, and travel in a reasonable and prudent manner. Trucks approved for platooning will have a sticker displayed on the power unit near other federal and/or state regulated decals and stickers.

What do companies need to know?

Platoon operators interested in truck platooning in Maryland, must **review** the Platooning Approval Process for specific instructions and details on platooning allowances. Once reviewed, the entity will **submit** the completed Application and an Operational Plan (detailed in the Process) for a small team of multi-disciplinary experts to review the route, safety considerations, and notice necessary to emergency responders and the public. For ease in applying, all information is outlined in these documents, and staff is readily available to answer any additional questions you might have by emailing CAVMaryland@mdot.maryland.gov

Platooning in Maryland is only allowed on controlled access highways. A **map of these highways** can be viewed **here**; choose "Roadway Access Control – Full Control" to view the potentially allowable routes. Also note that proposed routes will be reviewed for signals, roundabouts, non-auto users, steep grades, high traffic density, and other complexities. MDOT MVA will coordinate dialogue with the platoon operator and the infrastructure owner operator for appropriate operations.

Initially, this program will allow entities to apply for **authorization up to one year** prior to renewal. If approved, simple monthly progress reports will be required to help both the platoon operator and the MDOT MVA to accommodate different scenarios, encourage the use of truck platooning to enhance safety on Maryland's roadways, and support economic development of the industry.

At the start, this process will simply provide links to other permitting processes, such as oversize or overweight permits, for trucks on Maryland roadways – for unified knowledge and especially with out-of-state trucking companies. See **here** for other trucking permitting needs. As use of platooning increases, it will be included as a "one-stop-shop" platform for efficiency in route planning by truck companies.

What to look for in the future?

Maryland is open for business and eager to realize the life-saving and economic benefits of emerging technology, while ensuring safety for all -- embracing technology and innovation through continuing collaboration with partners interested in researching, testing, and implementing connected and automated vehicles in Maryland.

With that, Maryland will stay engaged to **sustain platooning and develop enhancements** for the future. This process and these documents are living documents; they will be reviewed regularly through discussions with the Maryland Connected & Automated Vehicles (CAV) Working Group and subgroups and may evolve based on these discussions and developments.

As the technology evolves, platooning in Maryland will be addressed to continue down the path to **future deployment beyond this current process**. This may include consideration of platoons with more than two trucks, platoons for other heavy vehicles including buses and military vehicles, and platoons with a human driver in the lead vehicle and an automated driver in the following vehicle.

The CAV Working Group includes various stakeholders representing industry, emergency responders, technical experts, and government agencies. If interested in finding out more or participating in these groups, email CAVMaryland@mdot.maryland.gov