

COVID Passport for Interstate Trucking

June 3, 2021

COVID-19 has impacted the United States economy and its industries throughout. The transportation sector, including interstate trucking, has not been spared. Interstate trucking, which entails exactly what the name implies – the transportation of goods across state lines – faces a host of compliance issues arising from varying state policies and protocol implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, constant travel among states that are in different vaccination phases creates issues for drivers seeking access to a dose of the vaccine. However, at the end of February 2021, in an effort to ensure vaccines are readily available for truckers across the country, American Trucking Associations (“ATA”) partnered with National Association of Truck Stop Operators (“NATSO”), and other associations, in pushing for truck stops and travel plazas to be used as mobile vaccination sites for professional truck drivers and truck stop employees.

In its letter to the Centers for Disease Control dated, February 25, 2021, the partnering associations emphasize the limited access to appointments and facilities a driver with a class 8 license faces, and request that such drivers be permitted access to vaccinations in states where they spend time frequently, but do not necessarily reside. The associations argue that drivers should be able to receive a vaccine elsewhere than their state of residency due to the long stretches of time they spend away from home. In their correspondence, the associations assert that administering vaccines through a nationwide network of locations, we can ensure the ability of the nation's truck drivers to continue serving on the front lines of the fuel and food distribution systems across the country. The associations also urge permission for drivers to obtain their second shot at a different location than they received their first. Currently these requests have not been fulfilled, though the organizations continue to urge lawmakers to act.

Another option could be the use of vaccination passports. Like many countries the United States is exploring COVID-19 vaccine certifications for use internationally and domestically. These passports would consist of a paper or digital certification that an individual has been vaccinated from a particular disease, such as COVID-19. The idea of international vaccination passports is not new, however, domestic passports would permit individuals access to certain businesses, locations, or activities across state lines, facilitating interstate trucking and the lives of interstate truckers.

The United States is among the certain countries considering vaccine passports at this time, but the needs of the interstate trucking industry are immediate. In fact, despite the continued demand, perhaps even now increased, for interstate shipments of good and services, the industry has faced a decline in drivers based on the difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. With motor vehicle departments closed throughout the United States, the ability of new drivers to test and qualify for licenses is limited, placing higher demand on a declining number of active drivers. As more individuals become vaccinated we will closely follow the impact on the interstate trucking industry.