

# Difficulties Posed by Heavy Truck Slow Acceleration

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It should appear obvious to most drivers that the slow acceleration of loaded, heavy trucks can cause difficulties amongst faster-moving traffic. We present the following example to illustrate the point.

Figure 1, below, shows a northward view on Clarke Road in London, Ontario at a point where a bridge crosses the north branch of the Thames River. The presence of the river causes a long sag in the road such that the road surface can be viewed from a long distance.



Figure 1: View, looking north along Clarke Road at the sag at the bridge over the north branch of the Thames River.

In this view there is a blue, northbound car that is just entering the sagged portion of road. In the distance, on the far side of the sag, there is a red truck that will be attempting to enter the road from the left (west) to travel northbound.

Figure 2 shows how the situation unfolds as we begin to see the front end of the red truck waiting to enter the roadway.



Figure 2: View, looking northward along from south of the sag of Clarke Road at the Thames River Bridge.

Figure 2 shows us that there is a substantial amount of traffic and that large gaps in that traffic are not available. A truck driver becomes pressured to select a shorter gap than optimum, or be resigned to wait a long time. If we look closely in Figure 2 we can see that there is a gap in southbound traffic developing on the far side, at the top of the sag, however there does not appear to be much of a gap in northbound traffic.

Figures 3 and 4 show closer views as we approach the bridge and we can note that there is a small gap in northbound traffic just in front of the blue car. This is the gap that the truck driver selects to enter the road.



Figure 3: Northward view showing a red truck preparing to enter traffic.



Figure 4: View showing a small gap in traffic ahead of the blue car.

As we see in Figures 5 and 6, the red truck begins its left turn onto the roadway in front of the blue car. At this point the driver of the blue car might come to the belief that this is simply a single dump truck because, in fact, the front portion of the truck appears to be exactly that while the rear portion is blocked by trees. So the driver of the blue car believes there is plenty of time and does not apply the brake. But the situation is not what it would seem to be...



Figure 5: View of red truck making a left turn onto Clarke Road in front of the northbound, blue car.

The red truck is fully-loaded. But not only that, it is not just a single dump truck, it is also hauling a pup trailer, as shown in Figure 7.

It takes time to detect that this is not just a single dump truck, therefore we see in Figure 7 that the driver of the blue car has still not applied braking even though the camera shows that the pup trailer is now fully visible. Finally, in Figures 8 and 9 we see that the car driver applies braking. However, that is not the end of the story.

As noted in Figure 10, the truck is hauling a full load of sand therefore its acceleration up the hill is very slow...and our blue car driver is not happy with this situation.

As shown in Figure 11, the driver of the blue car decides to pass this very long truck. Yet, how good was the visibility to allow the driver of the blue car to make that decision?



Figure 6: View of red truck making a left turn in front of the blue car.



Figure 7: View of the pup trailer suddenly coming into view while the driver of the blue car still does not apply braking.



Figure 8: View of braking being applied by the driver of the blue car.



Figure 9: View of braking being applied by the driver of the blue car.



Figure 10: View showing the load of sand visible over the top of the pup trailer indicating that the truck is heavily loaded.



Figure 11: View of blue car passing the slow-moving, fully-loaded truck.

There was little opportunity for the driver of the blue car to determine whether the road ahead was reasonably clear because there was a hillcrest further north that is visible in Figure 11. One must also consider that this car has a low-powered engine. We must consider that this car is travelling up a substantial grade and that the truck combination would be quite long thus requiring more time to complete the passing motion.

If there was a head-on collision then the driver of the blue car would be charged and that would appear reasonable. But that is not the complete story. We know from previous experience that the driveway from which the truck exited is very busy with similar truck traffic and conflicts like this are common. Figures 12 and 13 show a southward view from the north side of the sag and there is supposed to be a "Truck Entrance" warning sign visible to southbound drivers. Clearly we can see that this sign is blocked by vegetation and would not provide sufficient warning. Although the blockage of this sign might be viewed as unrelated to a potential head-on collision, it is just one of many factors that come into play.

It should remind us that the causes of collisions are complex and the factors that come into play are numerous. The consequences of collisions are large. In terms of the effects on the persons involved and the circle of family and friends, the consequences can be devastating. In terms of the official entities that must parse out the damages and liabilities, there is a strong current that pulls them to protect from acknowledging the extent of those damages and their liability for those damages. The result is that public safety is at times compromised.



Figure 12: View, looking south from the north side of the sag. A "Truck Entrance" warning sign exists on the right roadside but it is blocked by vegetation.



Figure 13: Southward view showing that the "Truck Entrance" warning sign is blocked by vegetation.

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