

Logical Reasons for Wegmans' and Its Vendors' Trucks To Not Use Upper Sliding Hill Road and Old Ashcake Road from a Management and Driver Perspective

By Doug Boyce, Resident of Atlee Station Village
(boyceconsulting@aol.com)

Assumption: Trucks leaving Wegmans' DC may desire to use Upper Sliding Hill Road and Old Ashcake Road to patronize the TA Travel Center Truck Stop on Lewistown Road or to access I-95 North to avoid traffic congestion on I-95 N between Sliding Hill Road and Lewistown Road.

The distances and travel times (at tractor-trailer speeds without any back-ups) from the intersection of New Ashcake Road and Sliding Hill Road (approximate future location of the truck entrance/exit at the Wegmans' Distribution Center) to the TA Travel Center Truck Stop are:

- Via Upper Sliding Hill Road and Old Ashcake Road: 3.1 Miles and approximately 6 Min 45 Sec;
- Via Lower Sliding Hill and Air Park Road: 3.1 Miles and approximately 7 Min 15 Sec;
- Via Lower Sliding Hill and I-95: 4.1 Miles and approximately 6 Min 55 Sec. (without catching Walmart and Atlee Station Road traffic lights).

Even though the distance is 1.0 miles shorter and the travel time is a few seconds shorter using the Upper Sliding Hill and Old Ashcake route rather than using Sliding Hill/I-95, there are many other valid, logical reasons why trucks should use Sliding Hill and I-95 as the primary alternative and not the Old Ashcake Road route. They are as follows:

- 1. The Roads and Intersection Are Not Constructed for Tractor Trailers:** Upper Sliding Hill Road and Old Ashcake Road (for about 2/3 of its length) are very narrow roads that were probably paved over old wagon trails or native Indian paths decades ago. For example, the curve on Old Ashcake Road at the Brown Grove Baptist Church is about 9.75 feet (117 inches) from the shoulder to the middle of the yellow double line. A typical tractor trailer is 102 inches wide. That leaves about 15 inches (ONLY 7.5 inches on each side of the vehicle) for tracking variance on a straight section of road. Now interject the off-tracking of the trailer going around curves which could be as much as 24 inches depending on the degree of the curve, and it is obvious that driving on or over the middle double line would be required to keep the trailer off of the shoulder.

The intersection of Upper Sliding Hill Road and Old Ashcake Road is one of the best examples where the roads do not comply with tractor-trailer requirements. Turning right onto Upper Sliding Hill Road from Ashcake Road is a most difficult turn to execute, especially with 53' trailer. The driver would have to wait until there is no on-coming traffic on Upper Sliding Hill so the whole road can be used to clear the telephone pole which sits on the corner. Also, coming from that direction, a driver unfamiliar with the area could miss the turn and go further onto Peaks Road to find somewhere to turn around which is also not good. Peaks Road is another road that will require a "No Thru Trucks" sign as will be discussed in another document.

Turning left onto Old Ashcake Road from Upper Sliding Hill Road will also use most of the on-coming traffic lane on Old Ashcake Road. Coupled with limited room for turning and no traffic light, this intersection should be avoided by tractor-trailers.

- 2. Safety:** The road and tractor-trailer widths mentioned above provide the biggest challenges and risks for tractor-trailers drivers when meeting on-coming traffic, especially on a curve. Both drivers have only 7.5 inches of room to not error, and that is on a straight section. Add the width of the mirrors, and the margin of error is even smaller. There could be a tree or mailbox on the shoulder which could make driving on the shoulder not possible, so one or both trucks may be required to stop and let the other one pass. When it appears that the tractor-trailers will meet at one of the narrow curves, at least one of the drivers will have to stop ahead of time to let the other rig pass. Not only is this a safety issue, but it also costs extra travel time and wear and tear on the truck and its driver. Much of what was just mentioned will also apply when a tractor-trailer meets regular traffic, especially with other large vehicles such as meeting a school bus. There is no need to go into detail on the safety concerns when a tractor-trailer competes with an on-coming school bus for road space – the pucker factor for each driver will be off the charts and would say it all!

As the saying goes, a picture can say a million words, so please review the video so graciously submitted by Deborah Baines which demonstrates how a tractor-trailer must use more than half the road in some circumstances because of trailer off-tracking, and how a tractor-tractor must use the on-coming lane to make a right turn onto Upper Sliding Hill Road from Old Ashcake Road.

<https://www.facebook.com/DeborahBaines/videos/ride-along-down-ashcake-rd-to-sliding-hill-rdtruck-doesnt-stay-in-the-lines-even/10221035797501102/>

Some other considerations are:

- 3. Time:** As seen in the statistics at the beginning of this document, the time to travel to the TA Travel Center Truck Stop will be close to 7 minutes regardless of the route that is used during non-congested travel times. Therefore, using the Upper Sliding Hill

Road/Old Ashcake Road route will not provide any substantial time savings. The Air Park Road route should always have a consistent time of about 7 minutes.

4. **Costs:** Since there will not be a significant difference in the route time during non-congested travel times, and since the frequency of gear changing because of traffic lights and/or stop signs would be about equal, the cost per route would be similar also. However, additional costs for braking, fuel, and wear and tear on gears and other mechanical parts may be greater when stopped school buses and/or mail carriers are encountered on the Old Ashcake Road route. Also, watch the insurance costs rise substantially after one bad accident on the Old Ashcake route.
5. **Additional Driver Effort, Risks, and Stress:** Using the Upper Sliding Hill Road and Old Ashcake Road route would require much more attention and effort from a driving perspective to avoid the additional risks presented by local traffic, school bus traffic, mail carriers, and church traffic. The extra attention and skill it would take to “keep it between the lines”; executing turns at a truly dangerous not designed for tractor-trailers intersection; and avoiding on-coming tractor-trailers, school buses etc., would add much stress, especially when very tired after a long trip.
6. **Old Ashcake Road is often flooded when substantial rain periods occur:** The spray and the water pushed into the on-coming lanes by tractor-trailers could cause another safety hazard. In the winter, the poor water drainage on the road often leads to significant icing too. Tractor-trailer drivers do not need icing issues in addition to all the other challenges already discussed.

Summary

Because of all the above reasons, it would be a win-win for Wegmans, its drivers, its vendors’ drivers, and for the many subdivisions, homes, and the church on Old Ashcake and Upper Sliding Hill Roads for drivers to use Sliding Hill/I-95 to access I-95 North at Lewistown Road when I-95 is not congested. The Sliding Hill Road/Airpark Road alternative would be the preferred route when I-95 is congested. Providing better safety for residents and truckers along with minimizing higher risks for everyone are sound, logical reasons for Wegmans' trucks to not use Upper Sliding Hill Road and Old Ashcake Road.

Recommendation

Wegmans uses PC*MILER for its GPS. If the roads in question have not been truck restricted by VDOT as is the current situation, the PC*MILER software will not automatically include the road restrictions. However, PC*MILER has configuration and programming options which can designate routes to be restricted. Even if Wegmans modifies PC*MILER to show restricted and preferred routes, and even if the Wegmans’ Management Team kindly requires its truck drivers in written procedures to not use Upper Sliding Hill and Old Ashcake Road, the Hanover County

Board of Supervisors should still submit a formal request to VDOT to install “No Thru Trucks” signs at the intersections of Old Ashcake Road/Upper Sliding Hill and Old Ashcake Road/Lewistown Road. Upper Sliding Hill Road above New Ashcake Road should have a “No Thru Trucks” sign installed also. Even if the Wegmans’ drivers abide by management requests and a customized PC*Miler, vendor drivers may not be aware of the voluntary restrictions. Also, the vendor drivers’ GPS systems may suggest that Old Ashcake Road is the best route when it is not the best one for safety. The “No Thru Trucks” signs should include verbiage to restrict “bobtailing” tractors from using the roads because their width can cause on-coming traffic issues on the narrow roads too, especially when meeting a school bus.

The “No Thru Trucks” signs should be installed prior to the Distribution Center construction (if approved) so that tractor-trailer construction trucks always use the new truck entrance that should be built first by Wegmans.

The other alternative would for Wegmans and/or VDOT to widen the roads and intersection on the Upper Sliding Hill Road/Old Ashcake Road route. However, those costs would be in the millions of dollars, and ideally should be built before the Distribution Center construction begins if it is approved.

This document may be used for the reasonable alternative route requirement as would be required in the VDOT request.

The VDOT link for the “Guidelines for Considering Requests to Restrict Through Trucks on Primary and Secondary Highways” is: [“Guidelines for Considering Requests to Restrict Through Trucks on Primary and Secondary Highways”](#)