



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **VDOT LAUNCHES TOWING AND RECOVERY INCENTIVE PROGRAM ON INTERSTATE 81 CORRIDOR**

*Program's goal is to help with quicker clearance of commercial vehicle crashes*

**RICHMOND** – Beginning today (May 24, 2021), Virginia's Towing and Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP) is up and running on the Interstate 81 corridor. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is applying an innovative solution that will help reduce the amount of time that drivers sit in crash-related congestion.

“Virginia's economy takes a hit of up to \$1,200 for every minute that drivers spend in traffic,” noted VDOT Commissioner Stephen C. Brich. “Incidents are the number-one cause of congestion on I-81, so we can make a real improvement on that interstate by getting lanes reopened more rapidly.”

81 TRIP is an incentive program that partners VDOT with heavy-duty towing and recovery companies to standardize their response to commercial vehicle crashes. The program facilitates safe and quick clearance with improved towing standards, procedures and training.

VDOT and the Virginia State Police (VSP) in coordination with the members of the Virginia Statewide Traffic Incident Management (STIM) Committee support this program to help to lessen the impact of major traffic incidents while meeting aggressive clearance goals.

81 TRIP pays a \$2,500 to \$3,500 incentive to a tow company that is able to open a travel lane within 90 minutes of receiving notice to proceed from law enforcement on the scene.

Crash-related delays enact significant impacts on drivers and the environment. This program helps to reduce lost-time costs, improve reliability and lessen the risk of secondary crashes that can occur in vehicle queues. These incidents account for 20% for all highway crashes, and become increasingly likely until congestion is cleared.

“Interstate 81 has a high percentage of trucks and rolling to mountainous terrain which contributes to the highest incident-related delay among interstates in Virginia,” explained I-81 Program Delivery Director Dave Covington. “We have seen success with towing incentives on interstates in the Richmond area since 2017, so we expect similar positive results on the I-81 corridor.”

Locally based towing and recovery companies were invited to participate in 81 TRIP. To be eligible, these companies must meet requirements to ensure only well-trained operators with proper heavy-duty equipment are dispatched to large commercial vehicle incidents.

81 TRIP is a part of the I-81 Corridor Improvement Program approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in December 2018. The more than \$2 billion package of targeted improvements was funded by the Virginia General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Ralph Northam in spring 2019.

Additional information about the I-81 Corridor Improvement Program is available at [Improve81.org](http://Improve81.org). The website includes interactive maps and schedules and details about upcoming and current projects that are designed to improve safety, increase reliability and foster economic growth along the 325-mile corridor.

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*\*Note to the media: This program is not to be confused with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Transit Ridership Incentive Program, which also uses the acronym TRIP.*

### **81 TRIP Facts and Resources**

- To date, 21 companies along the I-81 corridor are approved Towing and Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP) partners.
- Each provider is assigned a portion of the 325-mile corridor. When dispatched to an incident the towing company must have all of its equipment on scene within 45-60 minutes, depending on the time of day or day of week.
- 81 TRIP-qualifying companies must be able to respond with a minimum of two heavy-duty wreckers and a support truck. All vehicles must have TRIP-required equipment and personal protective gear for responding personnel.
- TRIP providers are subject to disincentives if they are unable to meet quick-clearance guidelines. The disincentive is a financial penalty that increases the longer an incident continues beyond three hours.
- VDOT has contracted Parsons Transportation Group Inc. to manage the TRIP program. This includes evaluation and training of towing companies; incentives and disincentives; and regular reviews of incident response and safety compliance.
- TRIP has been in place on interstates in the Richmond area since December 2017. An initial study of commercial-vehicle crashes cited a 62-minute average reduction in roadway clearance time. The study, performed by the Virginia Transportation Research Council, is found at [http://www.virginiadot.org/vtrc/main/online\\_reports/pdf/20-r11.pdf](http://www.virginiadot.org/vtrc/main/online_reports/pdf/20-r11.pdf)
- The [Operational Improvements](#) page of [Improve81.org](http://Improve81.org) has links to additional resources including detailed TRIP requirements, a YouTube video, and the Virginia STIM Committee's document library.

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