Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Campus Services and Stewardship
Vice President for Finance

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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Report:
Vendor Truck Safety Measures findings

UPDATE July 31, 2025

Overview

In fall 2024, the Committee for Transportation and Parking convened a working group to gather information regarding the progress MIT vendors are making in implementing truck safety measures across their fleet of large box trucks that travel to and around the MIT campus, and to consider actions MIT might take to encourage or require use of safety measures as a condition of conducting business with MIT. The goal of this work is to improve safety conditions for Personal Wheel (PW) riders and pedestrians on and near the MIT campus. (Personal Wheels include bicycles, scooters, hoverboards, skateboards, unicycles, in-line skates, and other self-balancing personal transport mechanisms.)

This work is part of a larger Personal Wheels Safety Campaign spearheaded by the Personal Wheels Safety Committee, a sub-committee of the Committee for Transportation and Parking.

Background info:

- City of Cambridge Truck Safety Ordinance, enacted in 2022, requires all large vehicles (defined as any Class 3 or above motor vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating exceeding 10,000 pounds) used by a City vendor while under a City contract to be equipped with convex mirrors, cross-over mirrors, decals, and side under-guard rails affixed to the side of the vehicles.
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts An Act to Reduce Traffic Fatalities, effective January 1, 2025, requires all large vehicles leased or purchased by the Commonwealth, or operated under a contract with the Commonwealth, be equipped with a lateral protective device (side guard under rails), convex mirrors, cross-over mirrors, and backup cameras.
- Mass.gov Truck Safety Devices page provides definitions and pictures of safety devices.

Objectives and goals

Successful outcomes of this effort include:

- Improved safety conditions for Personal Wheels riders and pedestrians on and near the MIT campus.
- Vendors conducting business with MIT:
  - are aware of safety measures and complete installation of safety devices across their fleet of large box trucks, and
  - regularly conduct training sessions with drivers regarding safe driving in an urban environment to protect Personal Wheels riders and pedestrians.

Team

Stakeholder

- Chair of the Committee for Transportation and Parking

Working group includes staff from

- Campus Planning
- Campus Services and Stewardship (CSS)
- Facilities Campus Construction
- Facilities Campus Services
- Facilities Operations
- Office of Environment, Health & Safety (EHS)
- Office of Government and Community Relations (OGCR)
- Office of the Vice President for Finance (VPF)
- Parking & Transportation Office (P&T)

Schedule and key dates

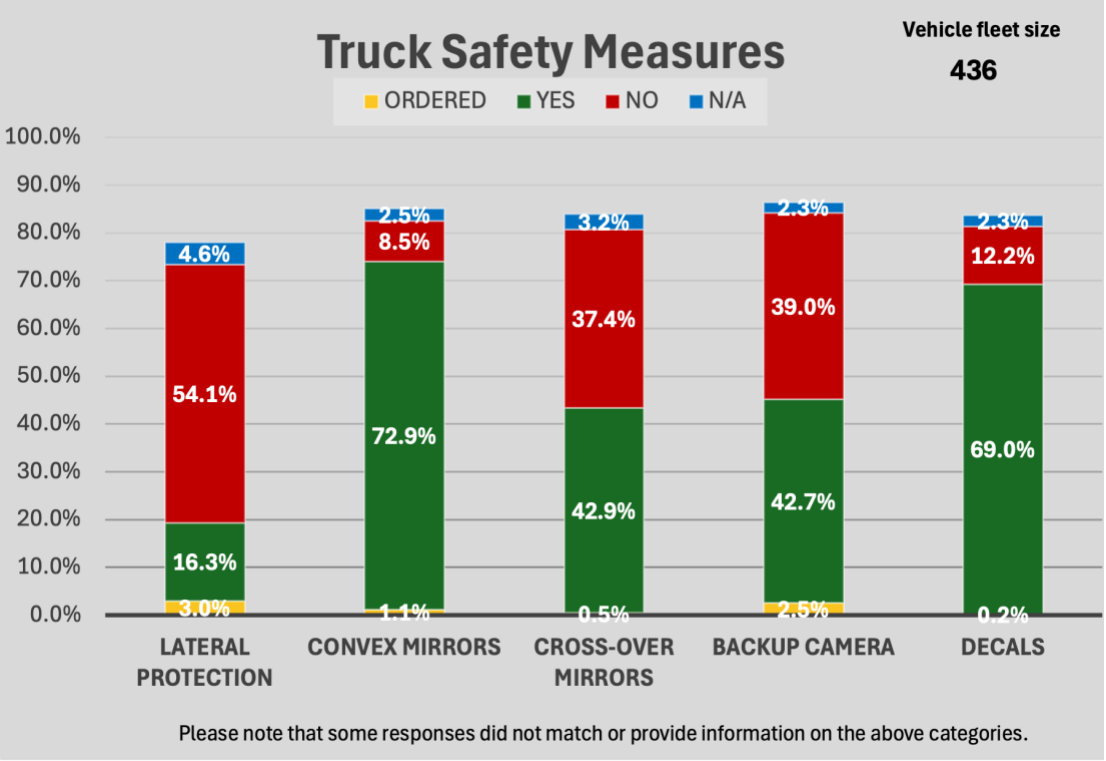
Date	Milestone	Questions / notes
October 2024	Letter of inquiry to appx. 95 vendors; forwarded to subcontractors	123 responses received
December 2024	Simplified request sent to appx. 29 non-responders	12 responses received
Jan 2025	Commonwealth of Massachusetts An Act to Reduce Traffic Fatalities, effective Jan 1, 2025	
Jan-Feb 2025	Draft analysis of survey findings	
April 2025	Present findings to committees and collaborators; share and invite ideas for next steps	4/24: TP Committee 4/25: GSC Bike Safety Committee

Requests for Information and findings

From October – December 2024 the team conducted outreach to approximately 95 vendors conducting work with MIT who were identified as the most frequent drivers of large box trucks traveling to the MIT campus. In the request for information, vendors were asked to provide information on implementation of safety devices, including lateral protective devices (side guard under rails), convex mirrors, cross-over mirrors, backup cameras, or decals (view definitions and pictures of these safety devices). They were also invited to describe safety trainings provided to their drivers that include strategies for being mindful of and avoiding collisions with pedestrians, cyclists, and operators of other personal wheeled vehicles, including scooters and skateboards. *(See Appendices 1 and 2 for the full text of the requests for information.)*

Responses were received from 64 vendors (67% of those invited) and an additional 63 of their subcontractors in a variety of fields including construction, dining, shipping/mailing/deliveries, transportation, lab products and services, recycling services, and office supplies.

Status of implementation of truck safety measures across all responses



Preliminary observations:

- The area with the greatest opportunity for improvement appears to be in use of lateral protection devices.
- Following MIT outreach, 8 vendors noted they were ordering and would install these devices.

Findings (continued)

Safety training themes

Vendors were asked to describe safety trainings provided to drivers that include strategies for being mindful of and avoiding collisions with pedestrians, cyclists, and operators of other personal wheeled vehicles, including scooters and skateboards. Themes that emerged from their open-ended comments include:

- **Formal safety programs**: Many respondents use structured programs such as defensive driving, CDL training, and third-party courses. Topics covered include driver awareness and bike/e-bike/skateboard/jogger hazards. Common training programs cited include Smith System training (https://drivedifferent.com), and training provided by insurance companies.
- **In-house safety meetings**: Routine internal meetings were commonly cited; weekly or standing safety briefings.
- **Onboarding training**: Many companies require training at the time of hire for all new drivers.
- **Toolbox talks**: Short, frequent safety talks are a key method for some; daily/weekly discussions.
- **Experienced drivers**: Many firms only hire professional, trained staff.

Insight themes

Vendors were asked to describe any insights gained during safety trainings. Themes that emerged from their open-ended comments include:

- **Benefits of training**: Investing in proper training leads to more confident, skilled, and safer drivers.
- **Safety plans**: Some vendors develop site specific safety plans for each project and suggested including truck safety measures / requirements in these plans moving forward.
- **Technology integration**: Companies are using fleet management software, GPS, and backup cameras to improve safety and monitor driver performance. Driver awareness of the monitoring improves self-governance and performance. Many use Samsara and cite improved safety performance as a result.
- **Operational adjustments**: Insights lead to changes in routing, scheduling, or policies to improve safety.
- **Vehicle safety upgrades**: Many trucks include or are upgraded to add safety features such as lane assist, automatic braking, and many vendors are installing side guards.
- **Communication emphasis**: Encouragement of driver communication and situational awareness, teamwork (many companies assign two drivers per vehicle to assist with lookouts and such)
- **Planning truck routes**: Vendor reviews updated traffic patterns and newly installed bike lanes in regular meetings; practice has improved ability to navigate safely and efficiently. Insights have enhanced operational safety and fostered a culture of vigilance among team. Training refreshers and initiatives foster a culture of safety, protecting the team and the community.

Findings (continued)

- **Safety bonus program:** Some firms set quarterly safety goals and reward and recognize team members who achieve them.
- **Studies have shown** that increased awareness and usage of safety devices (especially convex and cross-over mirrors) greatly reduce incidents near vulnerable road users.

Action inspired by MIT outreach

- Eight of the firms ordered devices and committed to installation upon receiving this information from MIT.
- Many firms who did not have training programs in place committed to contracting with insurance provider to create training documentation before end of 2024.
- “The carrier we've used in the past has said they will not be able to make the required changes to their trucks due to the cost. We are currently searching for another carrier that meets MIT's needs.”
- “In reviewing our training on this subject specifically, I can see that we could do a better job in detailing and spending more time in this area of training, and we will.”

Recommendations and next steps

Next steps

- Share findings with Committee for Transportation & Parking (complete), Graduate Student Council Bike Safety Group (complete), and interested parties and invite ideas on next steps.
- Send **follow-up email** to all vendors we surveyed.

Recommendations

- **Language in Requests for Proposal (RFPs) to vendors who use large box trucks:** As a first step, include questions in RFPs soliciting the status of truck safety measures implementation, safety training programs, and use of safety plans. Vendors who demonstrate commitment to pedestrian and PW rider safety will be ranked more favorably in award considerations. (Refer to requirements outlined in City of Cambridge Ordinance and Massachusetts Sessions Laws 2022.)
- Consider building **list of preferred vendors** based on level of compliance with implementation of safety devices and training programs.
- Explore feasibility of **requiring** use of safety measures.
  - Ask City and State how they are **enforcing/ policing compliance**.
  - Reach out to peer institutions for update on policies. Do any make requirements of their vendors, and if so, how do they police/enforce?
  - Explore feasibility of tagging trucks on campus who do not comply.

Appendix 1: October 2024 letter to vendors

The following Request for Information was sent to appx 95 vendors by the individuals within Facilities and VPF who work most closely with each vendor.

Subject*:* **Response required by 10/21: Implementing large commercial vehicle safeguards at MIT**

Dear [name],

I write to request information regarding a matter of great importance to MIT. As you may have heard or read in the news, there have been many fatal accidents in the City of Cambridge involving bicyclists and large commercial trucks, including a recent one resulting in the death of an MIT student. I am writing today because of MIT's interest in facilitating the safest possible environment on campus as it pertains to MIT vendors driving large vehicles to and on campus.

I've included information below on legislation and requirements established by the City of Cambridge ("City") and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ("Commonwealth") **requiring the installation of safety devices on their vendors' large vehicles**. MIT applauds these regulatory efforts and considers the implementation of these safety devices equally critical to maintaining a safe environment on and near MIT's campus (regardless of your status as a vendor for the City or Commonwealth).

We are asking that you or someone from your firm **please email a reply by October 21, 2024, and provide an update on your progress implementing these safety measures within your fleet.** Please be as detailed and specific as you can. Note that we are gathering this information for internal MIT use only. Send replies to me and my colleague [name/email], who will help us aggregate the replies.

In the response, please provide the following:

1. Company name
2. Contact information for the individual responsible for overseeing these measures at your company (name, title, email, telephone)
3. List any large vehicles (defined as any Class 3 or above motor vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating exceeding 10,000 pounds) that you or companies you contract drive to MIT properties as part of your work with MIT
4. For each of these large trucks, describe the nature of their use (e.g., the types of deliveries or work conducted with these trucks)
5. For these large trucks, provide the extent of implementation (total number of vehicles and percentage of fleet with completed installations) and/or the planned timeline to complete installations (total number and percentage of fleet) for any and all of the following safety devices:
    - lateral protective devices (side guard under rails)
    - convex mirrors
    - cross-over mirrors
    - backup cameras
    - decals
    - Visit this this page to view definitions and pictures of these safety devices.
6. Describe safety trainings you and/or your contractor provide to drivers that include strategies for being mindful of and avoiding collisions with pedestrians, cyclists, and operators of other personal wheeled vehicles, including scooters and skateboards
7. Describe any insights you have gained during these trainings

MIT values our relationship with you and appreciates your cooperation regarding this very important matter.

Thank you for your quick reply! Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Name
Title

City and Commonwealth requirements

In 2022, the City of Cambridge enacted a Truck Safety Ordinance that requires all large vehicles (defined as any Class 3 or above motor vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating exceeding 10,000 pounds) used by a City vendor while under a City contract to be equipped with convex mirrors, cross-over mirrors, decals, and side under-guard rails affixed to the side of the vehicles. The ordinance goes on to state that the provisions are intended to protect vulnerable road users (defined, in part, as pedestrians, persons using bicycles, skateboards, roller skates, mopeds and other motorized devices, and wheelchairs) that share the road with large vehicles, and emphasizes risks associated with falling under the sides or being caught under the wheels of large vehicles.

In addition, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted legislation, An Act to Reduce Traffic Fatalities, effective January 1, 2025, requiring that all large vehicles leased or purchased by the Commonwealth, or operated under a contract with the Commonwealth, be equipped with a lateral protective device (side guard under rails), convex mirrors, cross-over mirrors, and backup cameras.

Safety Decals, information from the City: Large Vehicles must be equipped with a minimum of two (2) safety decals on the rear of the Large Vehicle, two (2) safety decals on the left side of the Large Vehicle, and two (2) safety decals on the right side of the Large Vehicle, that warn Vulnerable Road Users of blind spots, with the following requirements: (a) Decals must be "safety yellow" in color. (b) Decals must include language or images warning of the blind spot locations on the vehicle. (c) Decals on the sides of Large Vehicle must be placed on or within one (1') foot of the Side Under-Ride Guards.

Appendix 2: Email to non-responders December 2024

The following communication was sent to appx 29 non-responders with a copy of the October request. The message was sent by the individuals within Facilities and VPF who work most closely with each vendor.

Subject*:* **Follow up – Truck safety measures information request**

Dear [name],

In October I reached out to request information regarding the progress your company has made in implementing safety measures within your fleet to reduce the risk of injury to cyclists, pedestrians, and operators of other personal wheeled vehicles, including scooters and skateboards. We received very helpful responses from many of the companies we reached out to, however, we did not hear back from your company.

I am reaching out to request a simple update on your company's progress in implementing these truck safety measures. (Visit this page to view definitions and pictures of these safety devices.) Over the next week, I welcome you to email or call me to let me know which of the following best describes the status for your company: A, B, or C?

A. We're not familiar with these truck safety measures, or they are not applicable to our company.
B. We are looking further into these measures.
C. We're in the process of implementing some of these measures and/or have already completed several installations on our fleet.

If a phone call would be easier, please let me know a time when I can reach out to you. It would be helpful for us to know where you are in exploring or implementing these measures. If you are not the correct contact, please let me know who I can reach out to for this information.

MIT values our relationship with you and appreciates your cooperation regarding this very important matter.

Thank you for your quick reply! Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Name
Title

Offices that conducted October and December outreach:

- EHS
- Dining Operations
- Facilities, Campus Construction
- Facilities, Central Utilities Plant
- Facilities, Custodial Services
- Facilities; Grounds, Recycling and Fleet Services
- Facilities, Mail Services
- Facilities, Repair & Maintenance Operations
- Facilities, Utilities
- Vice President for Finance, Strategic Sourcing team

Appendix 3: City of Cambridge truck safety education and outreach campaign

The City is working with communications firm Kleinfelder, Inc., to develop and execute an outreach and education campaign to raise awareness about the importance of sideguards and other safety enhancements on trucks traveling through and within the City. The team anticipates the campaign will be live from mid-June through mid-September 2025 and will include printed materials, digital outreach, and other collateral for distribution. They anticipate that this work will set the stage for an ongoing campaign that will continue in future years to gain additional traction and engage more trucking companies to improve safety on their trucks.

Presentation to City Council, 3/31/25

Brooke McKenna, Transportation Commissioner, Traffic, Parking, + Transportation Department

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/992?view_id=1&redirect=true+

Relevant content starts at appx 3:13:25

Campus Planning notes from the meeting:

The City of Cambridge has engaged Kleinfelder to help them develop an education and outreach campaign around truck side-guards and other safety measures. The discussion with the Council included questions about public engagement, as well as work with partners at the regional, state, and federal levels to encourage and even require truck safety equipment. In addition to promoting safety measures, another goal of this effort is to gather information on vendors that already use them for sharing with businesses, institutions, etc. Kleinfelder's timeline shows the campaign beginning in the summer after gathering data and developing strategies.

Appendix 4: Personal Wheels Safety Committee

Membership includes staff from:

- Campus Planning
- Campus Services and Stewardship
- Emergency Management
- Environment, Health, and Safety
- Office of Government and Community Relations
- MIT Health
- MIT Police
- Parking & Transportation Office
- VPF Strategic Sourcing