



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TRAM URGES IMMEDIATE ACTION ON APO TRUCK SAFETY

AUSTIN, TEXAS – In light of the recent fatal Hays CISD bus accident in Bastrop County involving a cement pump truck, Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining (TRAM) is urging immediate adoption of new local and state policies. The impacts of truck traffic and driver safety remains a poorly regulated aspect of the APO (Aggregate Production Operations) industry.

“The safety implications of increased APO truck traffic cannot be overstated,” said Don Everingham, board member of Preserve Our Hill Country Environment. “We encourage Texans to talk to their elected officials about TRAM’s common-sense solutions.”

The tragic incident in Bastrop County underscores the need for the APO industry to take action to improve safety measures and regulations, especially given the exponential growth in rock-crushing permits, quarries, and aggregate processing plants. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that Texas employed 195,850 heavy and tractor trailer drivers in 2022. California ranked a distant second at 143,155 truckers.

TRAM’s trucking concerns include:

- **Third-party drivers, paid by the load.** APOs often outsource materials transportation to third-party contract companies. These companies operate on commission-based payments, which can lead to drivers’ focusing on maximizing loads and potentially compromising safety and adherence to traffic laws.
- **APOs do not pay their fair-share for road damage.** The Center of Transportation Research estimates that a fully loaded 80,000-pound commercial vehicle damages road pavement at a rate of 26 cents per mile driven (not including impact on bridges and overpasses). However, the current Texas fuel tax from 1991 only collects 3 cents per mile. This leaves a 23 cent per mile deficit that taxpayers must cover.
- **Truck inspections are not keeping up with increased traffic.** Local enforcement groups need to be trained and certified in truck inspections.
- **Need for comprehensive drug testing programs and background checks for truck drivers.** The recent Bastrop County tragedy underscores the importance of this. Transport trucks are the public’s main interaction with the APO industry. Industry should ensure truck drivers are properly licensed with no prior criminal, drug, and/or driving offenses.

TRAM members have documented increased accidents in counties where APOs have proliferated, often faster than road safety improvements are made. Similar to State Highway 21, where the fatal crash happened, FM 969 is a state road in Bastrop County that has seen steady increases in commercial truck traffic and related accidents. TXDOT statistics gathered by

Friends of the Land show that commercial truck accidents in the county's portion of FM 969 doubled in 2022 and 2023, compared to 2021. For the four-year period of 2018 to 2021, a total of 13 truck-related accidents were reported, compared to 19 in the past two years (see attached chart).

In January, the City of Bastrop approved a speed-reduction study recommendation to reduce the speed limit on FM 969 from 65 to 60. Friends of the Land requested the study after FM 969 accidents from all vehicles jumped from 34 in 2020 to 65 in 2023, which included three fatalities.

"FM 969 is an old farm-to-market road with only two lanes and numerous dangerous curves," says Friends co-founder Skip Connett. "Yet only three of the seven APOs accessing it have put in turning lanes."

TXDOT acknowledged that FM 969 is inadequate for accommodating the rapid increase in heavy traffic yet says it lacks funding and resources to make necessary safety improvements, even in areas already designated as hazardous, he added.

In light of these concerns, **TRAM recommendations to address APO truck traffic include:**

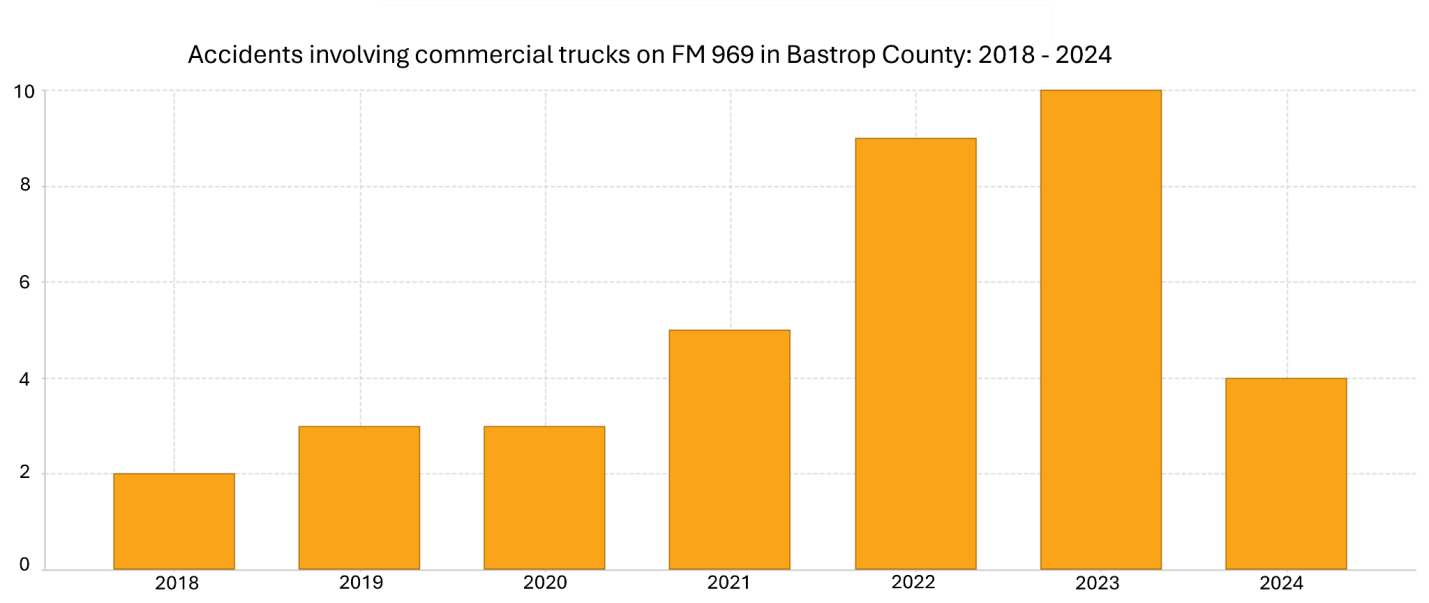
1. Implement state-mandated requirements for Transportation Studies as part of the APO permit application process, including comprehensive transportation plans, involvement of TXDOT and local counties, assessment of road infrastructure, and plans for managing trucking companies.
2. Collect APO severance taxes at the County and/or State level to provide funds for road upgrades, maintenance, and repairs necessitated by the increased truck traffic.
3. Include specific language in APO contracts with third-party truckers to ensure compliance with state, county, and local regulations. This should include mandatory notification of citations received by truckers and the ability for APOs to terminate contracts for non-compliance.

The rapid growth of the APO industry has resulted in major stakeholder conflicts and concerns across the state, particularly in the Hill Country and metropolitan areas. The impacts of this excessive truck traffic are far-reaching. Quarry Row, an expanding industrial complex in Comal County, has become a focal point for conflicts between APOs, nearby residents, and landowners. Additionally, the extensive mining of sand, gravel, and limestone in the Balcones Escarpment has raised concerns about air particulate emissions, water use and contamination, and surface and groundwater flooding. The lack of regulatory oversight exacerbates these issues.

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About Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining (TRAM): TRAM is a coalition composed of member groups across the state that seeks to work with lawmakers, state agencies, and good-faith industry operators to create state standards for Best Management Practices in the APO industry and to adopt those standards into law. Its member organizations represent 47 counties, roughly 40% of the Texas population, where APOs have dramatically expanded to meet the region's rapid growth. Stay informed by visiting www.TRAMTexas.org and following our Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages for news updates.

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Source: TXDOT Crash Records Information System (CRIS) Query