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The Truckload Carriers Association Proposes Additional Resources for Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

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One Big Thing

The Truckload Carriers Association (TCA) makes its case for a bigger, better-resourced Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

The TCA released a white paper making the case that FMCSA's budget and staffing haven't kept pace with the population it regulates. And that this gap is what lets chameleon carriers and reincarnated bad actors slip through the front door.

The numbers, per TCA: FMCSA's FY2026 budget request is just over $1 billion with 1,118 employees overseeing a regulated population approaching 8 million carriers, drivers and vehicles. The FAA, by comparison, is requesting roughly $27 billion and has more than 46,000 employees for a regulated population of about 1.7 million.

Only about 300 of FMCSA's staff are safety investigators. TCA reports they conducted fewer than 7,300 investigations in 2025 and just 1,356 of those were comprehensive reviews of a carrier's overall compliance.

Why It Matters

This is not a case for more paperwork on compliant carriers. TCA frames it as closing the gaps that bad actors exploit: chameleon carriers, reincarnated authorities, and registration fraud. That framing tracks closely with what the Trucking Association Executives Counsel (TAEC) has been saying in its Trucking Resurgence reporting: the industry is largely correcting itself, and better-targeted oversight helps distinguish the operators doing it right from the small population gaming the system.

The Details

- **Unified registration, real vetting.** TCA wants FMCSA to finish deploying its Motus registration system with meaningful pre-operational screening, not a USDOT number issued with no vetting at all.
- **94% of carriers carry no safety rating.** TCA wants FMCSA to retire its 25-year-old rating methodology in favor of continuous, data-driven fitness determinations. And to give carriers credit for verified safety-technology investments.
- **Follow the money.** Roughly two-thirds of FMCSA's budget goes to state grant programs within the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP), leaving investigators, auditors and fraud screeners competing for what is left.

The Bottom Line

TCA's white paper reframes the FMCSA funding debate as a safety issue, not a bureaucratic one, arguing that without more investigators and real vetting, the agency's own numbers show it can't tell compliant carriers from the bad actors hiding among them. The bigger question is whether Congress will treat regulatory capacity as infrastructure worth investing in, or continue funding an agency at 2000s-era staffing levels to police a trucking industry that's nearly quadrupled in complexity since.

For a full deep dive, click here to watch or click here to listen to my interview with TCA President, Jim Mullen.

If you or your company have questions about the white paper, please contact me or any member of the Saxton & Stump Trucking and Commercial Transportation Group.

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