

## Regulators must take slower approach to mandating green trucks: trade groups



*While for-hire carriers such as Pitt Ohio and Schneider National and private fleet owners including PepsiCo run battery-electric vehicles, most companies don't have the resources to be early adopters.  
Photo credit: Schneider National.*

Ari Ashe, Senior Editor | Mar 19, 2024, 4:36 PM EDT

A group of industry associations in commercial transportation released a study Tuesday that puts the price tag to upgrade US infrastructure to handle electric trucks at \$1 trillion, a cost they say would be substantial for shippers.

Members of the Clean Freight Coalition say they aren't opposed to converting from diesel to electric vehicles but argue that federal and state regulators are pushing timelines that are too aggressive and would cause supply chain disruptions and higher prices. A mandate that would require all trucks at California ports to be zero-emissions after Jan. 1 was temporarily stayed in December pending review by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Roland Berger, the private consultancy that wrote the report, said the \$1 trillion total does not include the cost to buy battery-electric vehicles, which are triple the cost of traditional trucks.

“If you want to use environmentally sensitive equipment like electric, it’s going to have to be reflected in the rates you pay,” Chris Spear, CEO of the American Trucking Associations, said during a press briefing held in concert with the release of the report. “And they’re going to be very, very high rates for our customers as a result.”

Added Jim Mullen, executive director the Clean Freight Coalition: “There aren’t many folks shipping freight willing to pay for the increased costs.”

Still, there are early adopters buying zero-emission vehicles, which are on average triple the cost of a standard diesel truck.

Schneider National has more than 90 battery-electric vehicles handling short-haul drayage in Southern California. Pitt Ohio and other less-than-truckload (LTL) carriers have also purchased lower-emission vehicles to handle freight light enough to fill a 53-foot trailer without reaching weight limits. PepsiCo’s private fleet also employs battery-electric vehicles to haul potato chips and other lightweight snacks.

## A phased-in approach

Spear said the trucking industry is not saying no to electric trucks, but rather that regulators must implement clean truck mandates in stages, focusing first on drayage and short haul LTL, then for-hire truckload later.

To reach the goal, the Roland Berger report finds it’ll cost \$57 billion to construct rapid chargers and overnight chargers at truck stops across the US. Another \$370 billion is necessary to upgrade the electrical grid and transmission lines to deliver power to the charges, according to the report.

Spear said bridge technologies are necessary.

“We need plug-in hybrids, we need renewable fuels, we need technology-neutral policies that breed innovation,” he said. “Going all-in on electric at this pace could be catastrophic, not just for our industry, but for the economy and what consumers pay. We’re saying you can do both; you can get to zero emissions if you do this responsibly.”

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