

## **WSGW RADIO PRESENTATION**

### **Food Trucks**

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Food trucks are on the rise in Michigan, which echoes a nationwide trend of these small, mobile food businesses increasing in number.

As food trucks started rolling onto American streets a decade or so ago, some states set health standards for them but left specific rules to cities and counties. Michigan has had licensing rules for these types of food trucks for more than a decade.

Now, faced with a complicated and sometimes conflicting system of local regulations, permits and inspections, some states are stepping in to cut the red tape.

In Utah, a new law that allows food trucks to move among localities with a single license goes into effect next month. Utah has 29 counties and about 300 cities and towns. In West Jordan, a food truck license costs \$1,400 and is good for only six months. The truck is prohibited from operating in the city the rest of the year.

In Chicago, the food truck industry lost a 4 year battle with regulations that require them to have GPS tracking devices and stipulations they must remain at least 200 feet from food establishments. They also are not permitted to remain in the same space for more than 2 hours.

A new law in Washington requires all mobile food trucks to have a state permit and inspection. The law removed a previous exemption for trucks used outside the state for six months or more.

In all, 13 states have considered 37 bills involving some aspect of food truck regulation since 2015, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) but only a handful of the bills became law.

In Saginaw County this is an increasing trend as well, as I take phone calls daily on potential new food trucks.

#### **Plan Review:**

In Michigan, statewide the annual license fees for food trucks are the same but the fees vary from county to county for initial inspections of the food truck construction. These are called plan review fees and typically are one-time fees for the review of scaled drawings, equipment layout plans, equipment specifications sheets, menu review, and approval of standard operating procedures.

## **A Booming Business:**

The U.S. food truck industry is one of the strongest food service areas. According to a market research firm, the industry grew nearly 8 percent per year from 2011 to 2016.

As the industry has grown, the lines between food trucks and stand-alone restaurants have blurred. Food truck operators often move to brick-and-mortar locations while established restaurants add food trucks, according to the National Restaurant Association.

Still, restaurateurs worry about competition from mobile vendors parked close to brick-and-mortar establishments, and some municipalities set parking time and location limits.

Food truck owners complain that complying with myriad local rules is costly and time-consuming and hampers their ability to do business in multiple jurisdictions.

Sources: Chicago Tribune, Michigan State University Extension, The Pew Charitable Trusts

[www.saginawpublichealth.org](http://www.saginawpublichealth.org)