

# **Trucking Interests and State Officials Have Misled the Public and Congress about the Safety of the Maine and Vermont 100,000 lb. Truck Pilot Programs Congress Must Stop Pilot Programs NOW**

## **The Pilot Programs Resulted in More Deaths, More Overweight Trucks and More Funding Problems**

### **Critical Information Concealed from the Public Revealed in FOIAs to MaineDOT, VTrans and FHWA**

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#### **Background:**

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 (enacted on Dec. 16, 2009) included a special interest provision that authorized a one-year Pilot Program for 100,000 lb. trucks on 250 miles of Interstate highways normally limited to the federal 80,000 pound weight limit, in Maine and Vermont. The Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), a Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) request with the Maine Department of Transportation (Maine DOT), and a FOIA request with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Startling information about state and federal officials' professional opinions on the roads being more dangerous, the infrastructure being compromised, and the lack of funding to pay for the additional damage was revealed.

Despite this proof that these pilot programs were deadly, damaging and unfunded, there is a provision to make them permanent exemptions in the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee on September 21<sup>st</sup>. The Senate could be taking up the bill as early as next week. The House Appropriations Committee will be marking up their version of the bill soon. Currently the House version does not include the permanent exemption but it is expected to be offered as an amendment.

#### **Must-Read Excerpts from the FHWA, VTrans and MaineDOT FOIA Responses:**

#### **The Pilot Programs Resulted in MORE CRASHES on Non-Interstate AND Interstate Roads**

- **Vermont's commercial motor vehicle fatal crash rate tripled.** "An analysis of crash rates shows that the fatal crash rate increased from .49 fatal crashes per 100 million miles traveled in 2009 to 1.44 fatal crashes per 100 million miles traveled in 2010." ("Vermont Truck Interstate Pilot Study- Report to Congress (State of Vermont Version for Review)- Summary Report (Draft)," prepared for FHWA by Cambridge Systematics, Inc. 8 Jun 2011, hereinafter "VT Report")
- "Commercial motor vehicle crashes on non-Interstate roads increased from 208 in 2009 to 258 in 2010, an increase of 24%, while Interstate crashes increased from 50 crashes in 2009 to 55 crashes in 2010, an increase of 10%." (VT Report)
- "It was expected that during the 2010 pilot that motor carriers would shift their operations from the secondary roads to the Interstate highways and that the number of accidents on secondary roads would fall. However in this case there was a significant increase in the number of crashes on non-Interstate roads, increasing from 208 in 2009 to 258 in 2010, a 24% increase. Because VMT decreased on non-Interstate highways in 2010, this increase also signals a higher accident rate." (VT Report)
- "The 2010 100,000 lb. weight limit pilot shows higher than average crash activity on non-toll interstate..." (File titled "Draft Maine CV Study")
- During the 5 years prior to the Pilot Program in Maine (2005-2009), there were 0 fatalities on local roads and 0 fatalities on Non-Turnpike Interstates involving 6-axle large trucks. During the one year of the Pilot Program, there were 3 fatalities on local roads and 2 fatalities on Non-Turnpike Interstates involving 6-axle large trucks. The total number of fatalities in 6-axle large trucks increased by 43% from 2009 to 2010. (File titled "Draft Maine CV Study")
- "The research team determined that 44 special excess permit carriers had commercial vehicles that were involved in crashes, i.e., approximately half of the "pilot" carriers had vehicles involved in crashes in Vermont during the 2010 pilot." (VT Report)

### **MORE Trucks Were on the Roads during the Pilot Program, not FEWER as Was Argued Would Happen by Supporters of the Pilot Program**

- “The Vermont DMV tracked the change in permits for 99,000 lb. 6-axle trucks, which **increased from 1,500 in 2009 to over 3,000 in 2010 during the pilot.**” (VT Report)
- “Because the **decrease in VMT on the non-Interstates was relatively small (1.5 percent)**, the pilot might have provided **only limited relief to some communities** that complained of heavy trucks using their local thoroughfares, passing close to schools and town centers.” (VT Report)
- “...the **percentage of trucks** in that weight category (more than 80,000 lbs. but less than 120,000 lbs.) has **not declined on the I-95 Turnpike following the pilot program** implementation. ...Truck classification sites count the number of trucks passing...for Sidney and Vassalboro, Maine. These two locations are roughly parallel. The figure shows...**a much larger increase in the number of six-axle tractor semitrailers on the Interstate.**” (“Maine and Vermont Interstate Highway Heavy Truck Pilot Program 6-Month Report”)

### **LESS Roadside Enforcement and SIGNIFICANT Brake Violation Percentages**

- “For those **trucks with vehicle weight violations placed OOS**, the truck was placed out of service for **brake violations between 54.2% and 66.2%** of the time.” (VT Report)
- “The number of **roadside inspections declined** during the pilot period and consequently the out of service rate experienced a double-digit decline to less than 10 percent of inspected vehicles.” (VT Report)

### **Pavement and Bridge Durability Compromised and Resultant Increased Costs**

- “If one assumes that greater than a ten percent ‘overstress’...is unacceptable, ***then these results show that every 100,000 lbs. truck is a problem.***” (Bold and italics in document)(“A Side-by-Side Analysis of Maine’s Interstate Bridges,” FHWA)
- “**Load-related pavement damage increased by about 12% on the Interstate system and decreased by less than half of one percent on non-Interstate highways.** This translates into **significant increases** in both the pavement maintenance and **repair costs in Vermont** born by the public sector agency and highway user costs due to more frequent work zones and/or deteriorated pavement conditions.” (VT Report)
- “The pilot **loading results in a 59 percent increase in damage** due to Class 10 trucks.” (VT Report)
- “Conclusions: There is **absolutely no question that these trucks will produce stresses significantly higher** than the 80 kip truck...most bridges in Maine are steel bridges, which are prone to fatigue problems, especially in light of large amount of salt used to melt snow in the winter...**Maine’s interstate bridges were not designed for 100,000 lbs. trucks.** This analysis shows that a significant number of **bridges will have their factor of safety reduced significantly.**” (“A Side-by-Side Analysis of Maine’s Interstate Bridges,” FHWA)
- “...I am certain all bridge engineers agree that the **100 kip truck reduces the factor of safety on any bridge** relative to the 80kip truck, regardless of the bridge rating...I [am] **uncomfortable with this reduction for some of Maine’s bridges...About 15% of Maine interstate bridges are rated this low. The 100 kip truck causes and overstress of about 25 to 40% in these bridges.**” (4/7/10 email from FHWA Office of Transportation Policy Studies)
- “Using Vermont truck weight data applied to these national average costs, a fully loaded, 80,000-lb 5-axle combination truck incurs 21.5 cents of pavement costs per-mile on the Interstate system and 32.9 cents per mile on other highways. A **typical 99,000-lb 6-axle pilot vehicle** requires pavement expenditures of 34.5 cents per mile of travel on the Interstate system and about 53.6 cents per mile of travel off the Interstate system—**about 63% more per vehicle mile and about 32% more per ton-mile than a fully loaded 5-axle vehicle.**” (VT Report)

### **Significant Safety Issues and Funding Gaps to be Considered**

- “FMCSA and FHWA research team members identified a **series of operational safety issues** that they recommend be **considered should additional pilot tests** of larger commercial vehicles be considered.” (VT Report)
- “The findings of this analysis warrant **greater examination of the potential funding gaps** in pavement programs **if the Federal government permanently lifted** the Interstate weight limits. For example, **Vermont might not be able to reorient its current Interstate pavement program to keep pace with the accelerated deterioration** of the system caused by the heavier trucks.” (VT Report)