

HIGHWAY AND TRUCK SAFETY GROUPS URGE CONGRESS TO OPPOSE EXTENDING DANGEROUS OVERWEIGHT TRUCK PILOT PROGRAMS ON INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS

IN MAINE AND VERMONT

Reject the Overweight Truck Pilot Program

Reasons to Oppose Increasing Interstate Highway Weights in Maine and Vermont:

- **HEAVY TRUCKS CAUSE SERIOUS SAFETY PROBLEMS:** A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) analysis of the Pilot Program that allows heavy trucks in Maine and Vermont states that 100,000 pound trucks reduce the margin of safety on highway bridges:
 - ▶ **“Maine’s interstate bridges were not designed for 100,000 pound 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 Interstate Bridges*, p. 6, FHWA (2010).
 - ▶ **“The screening analyses have indicated that the level of safety on the bridges is reduced by the introduction of the pilot program.”** *Maine and Vermont Interstate Highway Heavy Truck Pilot Program, 6 Month Report*, p. 24, FHWA (June 2010).
- **MAINE DOT PRESSURED FHWA TO TONE DOWN AND MASK SAFETY CONCERNS:** Internal documents and emails released to the public under the Maine Freedom of Access law reveals that Maine DOT officials heavily lobbied FHWA to weaken and tone-down the FHWA 6-month progress report and to reflect Maine DOT’s pre-determined view that 100,000 pound trucks are safe and economical. Even as the FHWA report was being drafted, Maine DOT continued to lobby Congress to make the pilot program permanent.
- **HEAVY TRUCKS CAUSE EXCESSIVE PAVEMENT DAMAGE:** Heavy trucks are the major cause of pavement damage due to high axle weights. To protect pavement and infrastructure investment, federal law limits axle weights to 34,000 pounds on tandem (double) axles and 44,000 pounds on tridem (triple) axles, but Maine allows 46,000 pounds on tandem and 54,000 pounds on tridem axles.
 - ▶ **“the 5 percent of the heavy tandems [over 40,000 pounds as permitted in Maine] cause 58 percent of the [pavement] damage.”** FHWA 6 Month Report, p. 26.
 - ▶ **“The Maine-Vermont Pilot Program has the potential to increase pavement damage by increasing the frequency of tandem axles near and above the 40,000 pound range.”** FHWA 6 Month Report, p. 27.
- **NUMBER OF HEAVY TRUCKS ENTERING I-95 NEARLY TRIPLED:**
According to data released by the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) and the FHWA 6 Month Report on the Pilot Program:

- ▶ the number of six-axle 100,000 pound trucks traveling north of Augusta that entered I-95 at Sidney, Maine, *nearly tripled* from about 400 to over 1,100 per week immediately after the Pilot Program started;
 - ▶ at that rate, and assuming the trucks are loaded to the legal limit, the total amount of weight on I-95 *more than tripled* from 32 million pounds per week (400 trucks x 80,000 pounds) to 110 million pounds per week (1,100 x 100,000 pounds);
 - ▶ during the first 10-week period of the Pilot Program (the only data that Maine DOT and FHWA chose to release), the reported number of six-axle 100,000 pound trucks using I-95 remained at *more than double* the total that used I-95 prior to the start of the Pilot Program;
 - ▶ the total number of six-axle 100,000 pound trucks using both I-95 and a parallel state route combined almost doubled, from about 600 to about 1,100 per week.
- Interstate Highway Truck Weights-White Paper*, p. 2, Maine DOT (2010) and FHWA 6 Month Report p. 10.

The increase in the number of trucks contradicts spurious claims by trucking interests that increased truck weights decrease the number of trucks and trips. *It never has, it never will.*

- **MORE HEAVY TRUCKS MEAN INCREASED RISKS:** Not only do more trucks mean increased safety risks on highways, but also greater infrastructure damage to highways and bridges because of heavier loads and axle weights and increased environmental degradation from diesel emissions.
- **MAINE LACKS FUNDS TO PAY FOR COSTS IMPOSED BY HEAVY TRUCKS:** Maine DOT assertions that pavement and bridge damage costs can be “managed” and savings will accrue from fewer miles of travel on other state roads are baseless.
 - ▶ **The Maine budget for highway spending is facing a significant shortfall of \$720 million over the next two years** according to the Bangor Daily News (Nov. 15, 2010) <http://www.bangordailynews.com/story/Statewide/Maine-highway-budget-shortfall-estimated-at-720M,158379>.
 - ▶ In the opinion of an FHWA official “**the real effect i[s] that it is in the state’s interest to shift the responsibility of repairing bridge and pavement from the State to the Federal government.**” FHWA Side-By-Side Analysis concluding editorial note.
- **THERE IS NO RELIABLE SAFETY DATA FROM THE PILOT PROGRAM:**
 - ▶ The FHWA 6-month progress report contained no reliable or complete data from the Pilot Program and reached no conclusions as to the safety of the program.
 - ▶ Maine DOT provided no safety or crash data. All the public knows is that there has been a dramatic increase in dangerous, overweight trucks on Maine’s interstate highways.
 - ▶ Even the Maine Motor Transport Association agrees that data is needed before the pilot program can be made permanent: “The decision to allow [the pilot program] on a permanent basis needs to be made based on data and not emotion.” Letter from Dale E. Hanington, to Senators Daniel Inouye and Patty Murray, dated September 4, 2009.