



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Cathy Chase – (703) 294-6404 and info@trucksafety.org

**Maine and Vermont Overweight Truck Pilot Program Puts Motoring Public at Risk
*Safety Groups Release Internal Government Emails and Documents Supporting
Their Safety and Infrastructure Concerns***

Lisbon, ME (December 1, 2010) – Daphne Izer, founder of Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) after her son Jeff and three of his friends were killed in a truck crash, and the Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) released internal government emails and documents showing that the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VT AoT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) had knowledge of serious safety consequences that may result from the heavy truck pilot programs. The one-year pilot programs, included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 (Public Law No. 11-117, H.R. 3288), allowed 100,000 lb. trucks on sections of Maine’s Interstates and 99,000 lb. trucks on Vermont’s Interstates.

On October 15, 2010 the Truck Safety Coalition, a coalition comprised of P.A.T.T. and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH), sent a request under Maine’s Freedom of Access law to MaineDOT for records related to the pilot program. After sending a subsequent letter to Maine Governor John Baldacci, the Truck Safety Coalition received documents which revealed that: 1. FHWA found serious safety issues with allowing these overweight trucks on bridges; 2. MaineDOT and VT AoT pressured FHWA to downplay these safety issues in the Congressionally-mandated six-month report and instead stress unproven economic benefits; and, 3. Taxpayers will be the ones to pay the price for these pilot programs as costs to repair roads and bridges will be pushed onto them.

John Lannen, Executive Director of the TSC, said “We were initially astounded to discover that federal and state government officials were collaborating behind closed doors with special trucking interests during the pilot program. Safety and public interest groups were never involved or even contacted. Then we were further shocked to learn that state and federal government employees had proof that putting 100,000 lb. trucks on bridges could reduce the factor of safety and cause them to overstress. They ignored the hazards and plowed ahead with this dangerous, ill-advised plan. These emails and documents show that the public has been blindsided as to the risks of this project. Today we are filing a Freedom of Information Act request with the FHWA to see what other information should be revealed to the public, especially those traveling on compromised bridges and roads.”

“As a citizen of Maine, a taxpayer, and a mother whose son was needlessly killed in a truck crash, I am outraged that my state government officials put special interests before the safety of innocent motorists. When lobbying for this overweight truck project, the trucking industry emphatically argued that allowing heavier trucks will result in fewer trucks on Maine’s roads. Just the opposite has happened. The number of six-axle 100,000 lbs. trucks on the roads monitored by MaineDOT has more than doubled since the pilot project started,” said Daphne Izer, founder of P.A.T.T. and Maine Volunteer Coordinator for TSC.

Joan Claybrook, former president of Public Citizen, the leading national organization on government accountability and transparency, and current Board Chair of CRASH added, “It’s time to put the brakes on this dangerous pilot program. Congress must reject any effort to extend or make the weight exemption permanent during the lame duck session. Do we have to have a bridge collapse like I-35W in Minneapolis with multiple deaths and injuries before government officials stop this reckless experiment? The State of Maine is facing a \$720 million shortfall in highway spending over the next two years. It is fiscally irresponsible as well as morally unethical for MaineDOT officials to be lobbying for extending this dangerous heavy truck project for the trucking industry.”

In September 2010, when the Senate Appropriations Committee was considering a provision to extend the Maine and Vermont pilot programs in the Continuing Resolution to fund all government agencies, six Senators, U.S. Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Christopher Bond (R-MO), John Kerry (D-MA), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO) sent a letter strongly objecting to the proposal. Their letter also cited serious safety and infrastructure concerns.

Documents obtained from the Maine FOA request and the letter from six U.S. Senators are available at www.trucksafety.org.

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