



## The Facts on Heavier Trucks

### **Proposals to allow 91,000 pound and heavier, overweight trucks on our nation's roadways will jeopardize safety and further damage our infrastructure**

Public opinion polls show the American public has consistently affirmed their overwhelming support for truck weight limitations, and firm opposition to holding taxpayers responsible for paying for infrastructure damage caused by heavier trucks. A survey conducted in April 2013 noted that a strong majority of Americans oppose efforts to change the law and allow heavier trucks on our roads and that this opposition spans almost every major demographic, geographic, and partisan group.<sup>i</sup>

### **Heavier Trucks Will Be More Dangerous to Motorists, Motorcyclists, Bicyclists and Pedestrians**

- Every year on average 4,000 people are killed in truck crashes in the United States. Department of Transportation (DOT) data reveals 2015 fatality figures showing an increase in large truck fatalities for the sixth year in a row – a 20 percent increase in truck crash deaths since 2009.
  - Last year, 4,067 people were killed on our roads in large truck crashes.<sup>ii</sup>
  - The number of people injured in these crashes has increased by 57 percent since 2009, from 74,000 to 116,000.<sup>iii</sup>
  - The number of truck crashes has increased by 45 percent since 2009, from 286,000 to 415,000.<sup>iv</sup>
- Big rigs carrying loads close to the current Federal Limit (65,000 to 80,000 lbs.) are already twice as likely to be involved in a fatal crash as trucks carrying less than 50,000 lbs.<sup>v</sup>
- Heavier trucks will increase the rate of wear and amplify the severity of collisions occurring when brakes underperform from lack of maintenance.
- The Department of Transportation Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study found that heavier trucks in three states have 47 to 400 percent higher crash rates. The report also found that heavier trucks have higher rates of brake violations compared to lighter trucks, which is a common reason for higher out-of-service violations.
- The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) concluded in 2016 that a truck with any out-of-service violations is 362 percent more likely to be involved in a crash.

### **Heavier Trucks Will Cause More Damage to Our Fragile Infrastructure**

- Overweight trucks disproportionately damage the already deteriorated roads and bridges. An 18,000 lb. truck axle creates over 3,000 times more damage to pavement than a passenger vehicle axle.<sup>vi</sup>
- The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gave our nation a grade of D+ on our infrastructure. Our roads were graded D and bridges, C+.<sup>vii</sup>
- The U.S. has 614,387 bridges, almost four in 10 of which are 50 years or older. 56,007 (9.1%) of the nation's bridges were structurally deficient in 2016, and on average there were 188 million trips across a structurally deficient bridge each day.<sup>viii</sup>
- A mere 20 percent increase in weight for a heavy truck increases bridge damage by 33 percent.<sup>ix</sup>

### **Heavier Trucks Will Result in Increased Costs to Tax Payers**

- The annual cost to society from crashes involving Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMVs) is estimated to be over \$112 billion in 2014.<sup>x</sup>
- The trucking industry underpays its roadway user fees and receives special interest subsidies, ensuring that they do not cover *all* the damages they inflict on roadway and bridge infrastructure, contributing to a chronic deficit.
  - The most recent study to look at federal government subsidies of heavy truck operations revealed that taxpayers contribute almost \$2 billion every year.<sup>xi</sup>

- The FHWA reported that trucks weighing more than 80,000 lbs. only pay between 40 and 50 percent of the costs for which they are responsible.<sup>xii</sup>
- Adding a 6<sup>th</sup> axle will not mitigate increased wear and strain on bridges.
  - The projected one-time costs of bridges with posting issues (i.e. the need for strengthening or replacing a bridge) caused by raising truck weights to 91,000 pounds is \$1.1 billion. This weight increase is expected to produce 4,845 bridges with posting issues.<sup>xiii</sup>
  - Heavier trucks will produce higher maintenance and replacements costs due to the reduced bridge life span resulting from increases to stress repetition and the rate of stress repetition.
  - The FHWA estimated the investment backlog for bridges is \$123 billion.<sup>xiv</sup>

### **Heavier Trucks Will Result in More Trucks, Not Less**

- Increases to truck size and weight will not decrease the number of trips, result in fewer miles traveled, or improve safety by reducing the number of trucks on the highways. The number of trucks and miles traveled on U.S. highways has consistently grown over the past few decades even after several increases in both the sizes and weights of large trucks.<sup>xv</sup>
- A 2010 study on freight diversion concluded that increasing truck weights to 97,000 pounds would result in a net increase of nearly 8 million more trucks on our roads and bridges, a 56 percent increase.<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Any So-Called “States Option” For Heavier Trucks is a *De-Facto* Nationwide Increase**

- Legislation to increase truck size and weight limits state-by-state is merely a back door attempt by trucking interests to come back to Congress in a few years and push for heavier truck weights nationwide.
- The “state option” was tried once before and history reveals that it resulted in heavier trucks in every state.
  - In 1974, trucking interests went to Congress and lobbied for bigger trucks as a state option.
  - Eight years later, in 1982, trucking interests came calling again and this time complained about several states not allowing 80,000 lbs. trucks.
  - As a result, Congress preempted states and increased weights to 80,000 lbs. in every state.

### **Both Law Enforcement Officers and Truck Drivers Consider Heavier Trucks More Dangerous**

- In a survey conducted by the Multimodal Transportation & Infrastructure Consortium, 20 of the 21 Officers who were interviewed indicated that longer and heavier trucks would be “more dangerous” because the additional length and weight would add “new factors to an already complicated chain of events.”<sup>xvii</sup>
- Likewise, surveyed truck drivers are consistent in their opinion that heavier and/or longer trucks impact safety. In fact, 90 percent of those surveyed believed that the increased use of 97,000-lb., six-axle trucks would negatively impact highway safety.<sup>xviii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Ulibarri, Joshua. *Increasing the Legal Weight for Trucks in the U.S.* Rep. Washington, DC: Lake Research Partners, 2013. Print.

<sup>ii</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: 2013 Motor Vehicle Crashes: Overview, DOT HS 812 101, NHTSA (Dec., 2014); FARS

<sup>iii</sup> Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2015, FMCSA-RRA-16-021, FMCSA (Nov., 2016); FARS; NASS GES

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> K.L. Campbell, et al., “Analysis of Accident Rates of Heavy-Duty Vehicles,” *UMTRI-88-77, University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, Ann Arbor, MI, April 1988.* <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/770> (page 71).

<sup>vi</sup> Equivalent Single Axle Load, Pavement Interactive, Aug. 15, 2007, available at <http://www.pavementinteractive.org/article/equivalent-single-axle-load/>.

<sup>vii</sup> ASCE Report Card for America’s Infrastructure 2017

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>ix</sup> Effect of Truck Weight on Bridge Network Costs, NCHRP Report 495, National Cooperative Highway Research Program, 2003, available at [http://www.onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp\\_rpt\\_495.pdf](http://www.onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_495.pdf).

<sup>x</sup> 2016 Pocket Guide to Large Truck and Bus Statistics, FMCSA May 2016

<sup>xi</sup> FHWA *Addendum to Highway Cost Allocation Study*, 2000.

<sup>xii</sup> 2000 Federal Highway User Fee Equity Ratios, Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report, FHWA, May 2000, available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2010cpr/pdfs/cp2010.pdf>.

<sup>xiii</sup> Technical Reports, MAP-21 Comprehensive Truck Size & Weight Limits Study, FHWA, June 2014, available at [http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/sw/map21tswstudy/technical\\_rpts/vol1technicalsummary.pdf](http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/sw/map21tswstudy/technical_rpts/vol1technicalsummary.pdf)

<sup>xiv</sup> 2015 Status of the Nation’s highways, Bridges, and Transit: Conditions and Performance, Chapter 7, FHWA 2015, available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2015cpr>

<sup>xv</sup> Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2010, Table 4 Large Truck Fatal Crash Statistics, 1975-2010, 1975-2010, FMCSA, Aug. 2012, [http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/facts-research/research-technology/report/LTCC\\_Report\\_LargeTruckandBusCrashFacts2010.pdf](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/facts-research/research-technology/report/LTCC_Report_LargeTruckandBusCrashFacts2010.pdf).

<sup>xvi</sup> Martland, Carl D. *Estimating the Competitive Effects of Larger Trucks on Rail Freight Traffic.* Rep. Final Report ed. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print. October 26, 2010.

<sup>xvii</sup> Multimodal Transportation & Infrastructure Consortium (May 15, 2013), “An Analysis of Truck Size and Weight: Phase I – Safety: Summary of Preliminary Findings.”

<sup>xviii</sup> Multimodal Transportation & Infrastructure Consortium (May 15, 2013), “An Analysis of Truck Size and Weight: Phase I – Safety: Summary of Preliminary Findings.”