



American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association

Friday, June 20, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair, Senate Committee on
Environment & Public Works

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Environment & Public Works

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chair, Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science & Transportation

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science & Transportation

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chair, House Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure

Dear Chairs Moore Capito, Cruz, and Graves and Ranking Members Whitehouse, Cantwell, and Larsen:

The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) represents the nation's over 600 Class II and Class III small business railroads and hundreds of railroad industry suppliers. Class II and Class III railroads, commonly referred to as short line railroads, are the "first-mile" and "last-mile" of the freight rail network. Short lines operate nearly 50,000 miles of track, or approximately 30 percent of the national rail network, connecting thousands of manufacturers, businesses and farmers in communities and small towns to larger markets, urban centers, and ports.

Railroads, particularly short lines, compete aggressively with trucks to service shippers. Trucks operate on publicly funded roadways, giving the trucking industry a competitive advantage over short lines who largely operate on privately owned and operated infrastructure. Initiatives to increase truck length and weight will exacerbate this competitive advantage. Truck length and weight increases will also shift freight from rail to truck in countless communities, resulting in the loss of railroad service. A small reduction in freight can cause catastrophic economic impact to a small railroad, even forcing a railroad out of business. As railroads shutter, and transportation options are reduced, heavier trucks will result in increasing transportation costs for consumers and a reduction in supply chain efficiency. We strongly urge you to oppose any increases to truck length or weight.

Heavier trucks will mean more wear and tear to public roadways.

Since 2008, the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) has received a stunning \$275 billion from the U.S. Treasury's general fund to cover shortfalls. That is more than a quarter of a trillion dollars. This is a gigantic subsidy of our biggest competitor. Given that, public policies that support freight rail make sense for Congress to consider. But at the very least, we ask that Congress not drive policy in the other direction and further shift freight to trucks. According to a 2016 USDOT, thousands of interstate and other National Highway System bridges cannot accommodate heavier trucks. These bridges would need to be reinforced or replaced, costing billions of dollars. USDOT estimated the 91,000-pound, six-axle configuration would negatively affect more than 4,800 bridges, costing \$1.1 billion; the 97,000-pound, six-axle configuration would negatively affect more than 6,200 bridges, costing \$2.2 billion; and triple-trailer trucks weighing 129,000 pounds with nine axles would cost an additional \$5.4 billion.¹

The trucking industry is not burdened by the full share of costs associated with building and maintaining the infrastructure it uses. This includes national and local roads and bridges, many at the end of their useful life. In contrast, railroads and their rights of way are purchased, maintained and operated largely at no cost to the taxpayer. Until the trucking industry pays its fair share of the cost to build and maintain the roadways it uses, heavier trucks should not be considered.

Moreover, rail is a far more efficient way to move goods and freight. One train can take hundreds of truckloads off our nation's highways. Diverting traffic from rail to truck is particularly concerning when it comes to hazardous materials. A 2020 study found that 91,000-pound trucks would divert up to 20% of rail carload traffic over a five-year period. The diverted traffic—including hazardous materials—would end up on our highways, adding more trucks to the road, causing more pavement and bridge damage, and increasing the risk to the public.

The dangers of heavier trucks are simply not worth the costs.

Proposed pilot programs to increase truck lengths and weights (some up to 10 years) would turn the American highway system into a proving ground for heavier trucks. The Transportation Research Board (part of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine) has recommended that the U.S. Department of Transportation study the impacts heavier trucks will have on infrastructure, traffic, and safety without putting motorists at risk. There is also existing data showing that heavier trucks present significant safety risks, like longer stopping distances. If a pilot program is desired, there are already some existing roads with higher weight limits which can be studied and function as a pilot program without the need for this proposed dramatic expansion of heavier trucks.

¹ USDOT; 2016. [Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Bridge Structure Comparative Analysis Technical Report](#). Table ES-2, pg. ES-7.

The ASLRRA, along with more than thirty national organizations representing law enforcement, first responders, local governments, organized labor, and others, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Association of Police Organizations, National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, American Public Works Association, National Association of Counties, National Association of Towns and Townships, National League of Cities, United States Conference of Mayors, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and SMART Transportation Division oppose heavier trucks and we urge you to do the same. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Baker', written in a cursive style.

Chuck Baker
President