



August 22, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture

Dear Chairs Granger, Graves and Thompson and Ranking Members DeLauro, Larsen and Scott:

I urge you to oppose any legislation that would increase maximum truck weights, including [H.R 3372](#), which would authorize an 11,000-pound truck weight increase for 10 years under the guise of a research program for states to “test” operations of 91,000-pound trucks.

Most of the vehicle-caused damage to U.S. roads and bridges comes not from passenger cars but from heavy trucks. With weight capped at 80,000 pounds, trucks pay for about 80% of their damage to roads and bridges. Other taxpayers and motorists cover the remaining costs. As truck weights go up, so does the damage they cause – but the percentage they pay for infrastructure goes down, meaning all other Americans pay more.

This amounts to a federal subsidy for heavy truck operations. Allowing even heavier trucks would increase the amount of that subsidy and incentivize the diversion of heavy freight from rail to highways. Every ton of freight diverted from rail means higher fuel consumption, more traffic, and worsened transportation emissions. Because rail is 3-4 times more efficient than trucks, trains today move 40% of long-distance freight while contributing only 1.7% of U.S. transportation-related emissions.

Moving freight by rail also lowers costs for shippers by about one-third compared to trucking. A weight increase to 91,000 pounds would divert an estimated 2.6 million annual rail carloads and 1.8 million intermodal units from the privately funded rail network to publicly funded highways, anywhere from 13-20% of rail volume depending on commodity.

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) has already embarked on a series of research programs on the impacts of heavier trucks. Congress has also directed the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to update its Highway Cost Allocation Study to evaluate road and bridge damage caused by heavy trucks and the scale of their underpayment (subsidy) at various weight classes.

Congress should ensure TRB and USDOT complete their work on the impacts of heavy trucks before considering any weight increases, including needless “pilot projects,” that would add to the cost of maintaining highways and bridges, create more highway gridlock, worsen emissions, and divert freight from rail to highways.

Thank you for your consideration,

Russell McGurk
President