



INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEED

OVERSIZE LOAD

We are falling behind.

Every four years, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) releases a Report Card for America's Infrastructure. U.S. infrastructure scored a "D+" overall, with U.S. roads earning a "D" and bridges a "C+" in the 2017 report card.

From the outset, the Highway Trust Fund was based on the principle that highway users should pay for highway upkeep and expansion. But that has not been the case in recent years. Since 2008, \$143 billion of general funds have propped up the Highway Trust Fund — nearly one-third of Trust Fund revenues have come from general taxpayers and not from highway users.

Even with general fund moneys, the U.S. highway system has been underfunded for years. ASCE estimated the backlog of highway and bridge needs to be \$836 billion in 2017.

In short, we are falling behind, despite the fact that infrastructure is key to economic development and facilitates modern life. Even these insufficient investments are not being fully paid for because not all highway users cover their costs.

Here they go again.

Every year, Congress is lobbied by groups that want a federal mandate forcing states to allow heavier trucks, longer trucks or trucks pulling more trailers; or, they want Congress to approve a 'pilot project' or 'demonstration program' for states to 'test' heavier or longer trucks on the motorists in their states.

Fortunately, Congress has resisted this lobby in recent years. In a landmark 236-187 vote, the U.S. House of Representatives soundly defeated an amendment to allow 91,000-pound trucks in 2015 and similar proposals have been repeatedly rejected by Congress since then.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) concluded in its June 2015 Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Technical Reports Summary that, "At this time, the department believes that the current data limitations are so profound that the results cannot accurately be extrapolated to predict national impacts. As such, the department believes that no changes in the relevant laws and regulations should be considered until these data limitations are overcome."

FAST FACTS:

- Nearly half of the nation's bridges are at least 40 years old and nearly 10 percent are structurally deficient (USDOT, 2017).
- More than 40 percent of urban Interstates are congested. Traffic delays cost the American economy \$160 billion per year in wasted time and fuel (ASCE, 2017).
- The most common truck on the road today only pays for about 80 percent of the damage it inflicts on roads and bridges; longer and heavier trucks would cover even less (USDOT, 2000).
- Allowing longer or heavier trucks would divert freight from railroads onto highways, increasing the costs to taxpayers for road and bridge upkeep and decreasing the efficiency of the intermodal network (USDOT, 2015; Mingo & Burton, 2018).



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Bigger trucks, bigger problems.

Heavy trucks on the road today do not pay for their full share of road and bridge damage, and heavier and longer trucks would cover even less of their costs than trucks on the road today.

- The most recent federal study to look at the issue showed that the federal government already subsidizes heavy truck operations \$1.9 billion every year and that trucks at the current 80,000-pound weight limit only pay for about 80 percent of the damage they inflict (FHWA, 2000).
- 91,000-pound trucks would only pay for about 55 percent of their damage (USDOT, 2000). Non-government studies have found that longer doubles would pay for even less of their costs.
- USDOT concluded in 2015 that double 33s would increase pavement damage by 1.8 percent to 2.7 percent, which translates to \$1.2 to \$1.8 billion in estimated pavement damage every year.
- 91,000-pound, six-axle trucks would negatively affect more than 4,800 NHS bridges. Longer double-trailer trucks would necessitate the strengthening or reinforcement of nearly 2,500 Interstate and other NHS bridges (USDOT, 2015). That does not include the other 80 percent of bridges on state and local roads that would be more vulnerable to longer trucks. It is also on top of the \$30+ billion of rehab already needed by the nation's bridges (USDOT, 2014).
- Trucks on the road today would need to pay an additional 28 cents per gallon diesel tax just to break even; 91,000-pound trucks would need to pay 70 cents more per gallon (Norbridge, 2007).

BIGGER TRUCKS = MORE TRUCKS, LESS EFFICIENCY

When bigger trucks do not cover their full infrastructure costs, the government subsidy to highway freight movement increases, which influences the marketplace and diverts freight from other modes onto highways.

This would mean millions more tons of freight on already crowded roads and highways at a time when we're not keeping up with existing infrastructure funding needs. Plus, every ton diverted from rail means greater fuel consumption and even greater emissions.

- Because two 33-foot intermodal trailers cannot fit on a single rail platform, it would take twice as many platforms to move the same number of intermodal trailers, decreasing network efficiency and diverting even more intermodal freight to the highways (Mingo and Burton, 2018).
- USDOT found that 91,000-pound, six-axle trucks would divert 2.3 million tons of freight from rail annually (USDOT, 2015). Other studies have found higher diversion rates.
- Railroads are four times as fuel efficient as highway transportation, on average, which means that every ton moving by rail emits 75 percent fewer greenhouse gases than moving that ton via highway transport.
- Since Congress last raised truck weights, the number of trucks registered in the U.S. and the miles they drive have continued to increase every year. Bigger trucks have never meant fewer trucks.

Subsidizing even bigger trucks would divert freight from rail, increase the cost of maintaining highways and bridges, exacerbate Highway Trust Fund inadequacy, create more highway gridlock and worsen air pollution. Congress should reject proposals to allow longer and heavier trucks.