



THEY'RE COMING...

OVERSIZE LOAD

Here they go again.

Powerful interests that continually push Congress to allow supersized trucks on Interstate highways are now targeting Virginia. They want to test how much extra damage heavier trucks would cause to the Commonwealth's roads and bridges, using Virginia drivers as guinea pigs in a "pilot project" that would raise maximum truck weights from 80,000 pounds to 91,000 pounds.

SB 504 and HB 1276 would make Virginia part of a proposed 10-state experiment to assess the effects of heavier trucks.

The U.S. House of Representatives rejected an amendment to allow 91,000-pound trucks in 2015 and similar proposals have been repeatedly rejected by Congress in recent years. 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."

Bigger trucks, bigger problems.

Increasing truck weight increases the pounding roads and bridges take from truck travel. The additional weight will wear out pavement quicker and add to bridge stress when many of our roads and bridges are already in dire need of improvement.

USDOT found that thousands of Interstate and other National Highway System bridges could not accommodate heavier trucks. Those bridges would require posting, reinforcement or replacement, costing billions of dollars. That does not include the impact on state and local bridges, which are typically built to lower standards and would be even more dramatically affected by increases in truck weight.

Adding insult to injury, heavy trucks on the road today do not pay for their full share of road and bridge damage. In fact, 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 (FHWA Addendum to Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study, 2000).

Heavier trucks would cover even less of their costs, which would increase the subsidy to heavy trucks and divert 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.

Subsidizing even bigger trucks would divert freight from rail, increase the cost of maintaining highways and bridges, create more gridlock and worsen air pollution. The General Assembly and Congress should reject proposals to allow heavier trucks.

FAST FACTS:

- 49 percent of Virginia's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on roads in need of repair costs Virginia drivers \$3.2 billion each year, \$556 per driver (TRIP, 2017).
- 65 percent of Virginia bridges are either in poor or fair condition (USDOT, 2016).
- Trucks at the current 80,000-pound weight limit only pay for about 80 percent of the damage they inflict. 91,000-pound trucks only pay for about 55 percent of their damage (USDOT, 2000).
- 91,000-pound, six-axle trucks would negatively affect more than 4,800 NHS bridges, costing \$1.1 billion (USDOT, 2015). This is on top of the \$30+ billion of rehab already needed by the nation's bridges (USDOT, 2014).
- 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 much higher diversion rates.
- Trucks on the road today would need to pay an additional 28¢ per gallon of diesel just to break even; 91,000-pound trucks would need to pay 70¢ more per gallon (Norbridge, 2007).

