



BIGGER TRUCKS, GREATER RISKS

America Can't Afford Bigger Trucks

Background

- Some politicians in Washington are considering allowing big trucks to get even bigger – increasing the weight limits by more than twenty percent from 80,000 to 97,000. That could mean safety problems, further worsen our roads and cost taxpayers dearly.

Large trucks are already dangerous.

- Nationally, large trucks are involved in 1.79 fatal crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled – nearly 40 percent higher than the rate for cars.¹

Bigger trucks are more dangerous.

- Bigger trucks will take longer to stop because increasing truck weight will lead to brake maintenance problems.²
- A bigger truck is more likely to wear out its important equipment sooner. Components that are at risk include the brakes, suspension and tires. Greater equipment wear means a greater risk of accidents.
- Bigger trucks mean more weight and energy in crashes - accidents become severe accidents and severe accidents can become fatalities.
- Bigger trucks are more likely to roll over because they will tend to have a higher center of gravity, and raising the center of gravity greatly increases the risk of rollovers.³

Trucks cause a disproportionate amount of damage to roads and bridges.

- The Federal Highway Administration's 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study found that trucks were responsible for 40 percent of FHWA program costs (on projects including infrastructure, highway, local road and bridge repair), while accounting for less than 10 percent of total vehicle miles traveled (VMT).⁴

Bigger trucks will take America's roads and bridges from bad to worse.

¹ *Traffic Safety Facts 2008*, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, p. 17

² *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, US Department of Transportation, Volume 3, p. VIII-10, 2000.

³ *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, US DOT, Volume 3, p. VIII-8, 2000.

⁴ *2006 Conditions & Performance Report*, Federal Highway Administration, Chapter 14.

- One of every four bridges in the U.S. is already structurally deficient or functionally obsolete,⁵ and it would cost nearly \$200 billion to repair these structures, without even taking into account the extensive damage that would be caused by bigger trucks.⁶
- The additional cost of repairing bridge damage caused by raising truck size 20 percent from 80,000 pounds to 97,000 pounds could be as much as \$65 billion.⁷

Large trucks pay only a fraction of the costs they inflict on taxpayers.

- Large trucks on the road today cause nearly \$2 billion in highway damage that the trucking industry does not pay for. This cost is paid for by U.S. taxpayers and motorists to repair the damage trucks cause to our highway infrastructure – a cost that will be even higher if we allow heavier and longer trucks.⁸
- The most common truck currently on the road—an 80,000 pound five-axle single—pays just 80 percent of the maintenance costs it inflicts on roads.⁹
- A 97,000-pound six-axle single would pay for only half of the damage it causes.¹⁰
- To cover the full federal cost of 97,000-pound six-axle trucks, operators of such trucks would need to pay an additional \$1.17 (in 2007 dollars) per gallon fuel tax. Even this would not recover the state and local share of truck underpayment or the additional bridge costs attributable to these trucks.¹¹
- Financially strapped state and local governments must pay billions every year to repair the damage caused by large trucks.¹² That number will be significantly higher if truck size is allowed to increase, meaning that less money will be available for programs our communities need and depend on.

Bigger trucks mean even more trucks on the road.

- Past increases in truck size have not resulted in fewer trucks, fewer trips or fewer miles traveled – on the contrary.¹³
- A 2010 study concluded that raising truck weight from 80,000 pounds to 97,000 pounds could actually result in 8 million additional truckloads on our highways.¹⁴ That means more, bigger trucks would be driving on our nation’s roadways.

⁵ *National Bridge Inventory*, Federal Highway Administration, 2008.

⁶ *Conditions and Performance Report*, Federal Highway Administration, 2006.

⁷ *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, US Department of Transportation, Volume 3, p. VI-11, 2000.

⁸ *Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report*, FHWA, 2000.

⁹ *Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report*, FHWA, 2000.

¹⁰ *Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report*, FHWA, 2000.

¹¹ CABT calculations based on *Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report*, FHWA, 2000.

¹² *Addendum to the 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study Final Report*, FHWA, 2000.

¹³ *Highway Statistics*, FHWA, 1980-2010.

¹⁴ *Estimating the Competitive Effects of Larger Trucks on Rail Freight Traffic*, Dr. Carl Martland, 2010.