

## AMERICAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS

### PROPOSALS FOR REFORM OF FEDERAL TRUCK SIZE AND WEIGHT REGULATIONS

ATA recommends seven limited reforms to federal truck size and weight regulations:

#### **1. Allow western states to harmonize longer combination vehicle laws and regulations.**

In April 2004, the Federal Highway Administration released its “Western Uniformity Scenario Analysis.” The report looked at the impacts of allowing uniform western state longer combination vehicle (LCV) use, including the impacts if LCV use was expanded to the entire western region’s Interstate Highway System (excluding California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas).

The report found a 25.5% reduction in total truck vehicle miles, and little impact on rail market share or profitability. The study found a slight reduction in pavement maintenance costs, but estimated that bridge costs would more than double. Overall, infrastructure costs would rise by between \$43 million and \$133 million per year in the study region. The reduced VMT would result in 12% lower energy consumption, 10% less noise, and 12% lower emissions. Shipper savings would total just over \$2 billion per year, about a 4% cost reduction.

#### **2. Allow states to authorize 6-axle, 97,000 pound tractor semi-trailers.**

ATA recommends the authorization of single-trailer trucks with a GVW of 97,000 lbs, provided the truck has six axles, including a tridem axle on the rear of the trailer. Maximum weight on the tridem axle is limited to 51,000 lbs. While current single and tandem axle weight limits would continue, this vehicle would exceed the GVW allowed under the current bridge formula.

Operation of this vehicle, along with the vehicle described in #6 below, is expected to produce positive safety, energy, environmental, congestion, economic and infrastructure preservation benefits. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimated that nationwide operation of these trucks would reduce overall truck vehicle miles traveled by 11%. This would produce measurable reductions in the number of truck-involved accidents and levels of congestion. In addition, the vehicle’s higher payload, despite a slight fuel economy penalty, would produce a 19% decrease in fuel consumption and emissions versus an 80,000 lbs GVW truck, when measured on a ton-mile basis. There is also substantial evidence to suggest that adoption of this vehicle, on either a nationwide or regional basis, will lower shipping costs, thus reducing costs to U.S. manufacturers, farmers, retailers and, ultimately, to consumers. Finally, the additional axle would offset the extra weight of this truck, eliminating negative pavement impacts, and in fact producing cost savings as a result of the reduction in the number of trips expected due to the vehicle’s greater payload. While there are potential negative cost impacts for bridges, the ability of states to regulate routes of operation should allow them to minimize these costs, and may actually produce cost savings if heavier vehicles shift from secondary roads to Interstate Highways that have stronger bridges.

### **3. Uncap Bridge Formula B for 5-axle combination vehicles.**

Maintain current federal axle weight and bridge formula limits, but lift the 80,000 lbs GVW cap. This will have two benefits. First, for those trailers with tandem axles that slide independently, spreading the axles 96 inches or more allows the axles to be weighed independently as single axles, thus allowing up to 20,000 lbs on each axle, for a maximum GVW of 86,000 lbs. Another benefit is that the absence of a GVW cap will help to compensate for the increased weight of tractors due to federal emissions regulations and state and local idling restrictions.

### **4. Allow limited expansion of LCVs beyond western scenario states.**

Longer Combination Vehicles operate on a limited basis in states beyond those in the western uniformity scenario. LCV doubles and triples are currently allowed on the Ohio Turnpike and Indiana Toll Road. LCV doubles are also allowed on the Florida Turnpike, New York Thruway and Massachusetts Turnpike. In addition, LCV doubles and triples operate on a short section of I-15 in Arizona and in Alaska. Limited expansion in states that are interested in allowing these configurations can help relieve congestion, improve air quality, reduce crashes, and reduce fuel usage.

### **5. Standardize 53 foot trailer length.**

Current federal law establishes 48' as the minimum trailer length on the National Network (NN). There is no federal limit on trailer length, and all states impose length restrictions. Trailer length on the Interstate System is limited to 53' except in the following states, which allow trailers longer than 53': Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. In addition, 53' trailers are not allowed on I-95 in New York City or on I-295 in Washington, DC. Some jurisdictions restrict the movement of trailers longer than 48' on National Network highways that are not part of the Interstate System.

While national trailer uniformity is federally protected for 48' trailers, 53' trailers have become the industry standard. Federal law should be brought up to modern standards to ensure the continued protection of the flow of interstate commerce by changing minimum trailer length limits to 53'. In addition, ATA supports capping trailer length at 53' except in states where longer trailers are currently allowed.

### **6. Allow states to authorize double 33-foot trailers.**

Transportation Research Board Special Report 267 recommended nationwide operation of double 33' trailers, with no gross weight cap and weight limited by the current federal bridge formula and axle weight limits. According to the TRB report, the bridge formula would allow for a maximum weight of 111,000 lbs on 9 axles. The double 33' trailer combination is appropriate for operation on most highways because its operational characteristics are similar to a 45' tractor-semitrailer combination.

## **7. Allow a 10% axle and gross weight tolerance for auto transporters.**

In 2007, more than 52% of the motor vehicles sold in the United States were either minivans, pick-up trucks, or sport utility vehicles. Because these vehicles are heavier than passenger cars, many auto haulers cannot legally load their equipment to maximum capacity and also meet the 80,000 pound gross weight limit. In many instances, there is space on the truck for one or two additional vehicles, but adding additional vehicles would make the truck overweight under federal law.

While larger vehicle sales are declining in the face of higher fuel costs, sales of hybrid vehicles are increasing substantially. A large hybrid SUV can weigh up to 1,900 pounds more than the non-hybrid version of the same vehicle, while the weight of a hybrid passenger car can exceed its non-hybrid counterpart's weight by more than four hundred pounds.

A 10% axle and gross weight tolerance would allow auto transporters to reduce the number of trips needed to deliver passenger vehicles, reducing accident exposure, fuel use and emissions. Fewer trips also mean lower transportation costs for the automobile manufacturing industry.

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