

Maine DOT Wants to Open All of I-95 to 100,000 Pounds Giant Combination Trucks Despite Clear Dangers and Road Damage

Maine Families Will Pay with Their Lives and Their Wallets

Maine Government Officials are Collaborating with National and State Special Trucking Interests to Promote An Agenda of Bigger and Heavier Trucks Throughout the U.S.

Impact on Highway Safety:

- **Truck Safety in the U.S. and Maine is Moving in Reverse:** Truck safety is not improving in the U.S. Data for 2005 (NHTSA) project that 5,226 people were killed in crashes involving large trucks, the third year in a row that big truck crash deaths continued to mount. About one of every 8 traffic crash fatalities each year is the result of a large truck collision.
- **Passenger Vehicle Occupants Die in Record Numbers in Crashes with Big Trucks:** In two-vehicle crashes between a small passenger vehicle and a large truck, 98 percent of the resulting deaths are the occupants of the small passenger vehicles.
- **Maine Allows Giant, Extra-Heavy Trucks to Operate Even on Small Township Roads:** Maine is allowing combination trucks up to 100,000 pounds to operate even on lower-class local roads and streets, including tank-trucks carrying hazardous materials.
- **Crashes of Giant Trucks in Maine Tripled in only Five Years:** Big truck crashes continue to rise at an astounding rate in Maine, with 623 crashes in 1999 climbing rapidly to 1,705 reported crashes in 2003.
- **Making Existing Trucks Even Heavier Makes Them Even More Dangerous:** According to the Federal Highway Administration in background research for the 1997 *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study*, making existing trucks heavier increases crash risk due to poorer braking and more rollover crashes.
- **Bigger, Heavier Trucks Allowed under Special Interest Exemptions Are Incompatible with the Roads Opened to Their Use:** Numerous federal and private sector studies have shown that longer, heavier trucks operate with lower safety margins on both Interstate and lower class roads.
- **More Freight in Maine Should Be Carried by Railroads:** Railroad freight transportation is far safer than extra-heavy truck freight transportation.
 - ▶ In 2005, Maine had *no* freight train collision deaths and only *two* nonfatal collision injuries.
 - ▶ Rail freight transportation has only *one-seventh the fatality rate that heavy trucks do per one trillion ton-miles of travel.*
 - ▶ According to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) *nationwide train crashes decreased 7.9 percent in 2005 and the grade crossing collision rate reached an all-time record low of 3.8 per one million train-miles of travel.*
- **The Maine Legislature Has Urged More Freight Transportation by Rail:** A 2002 report from the Maine Legislature recommended major actions to reverse the loss of freight transportation by rail in the state. The lead recommendation was directed to the Maine Department of Transportation Commissioner to acquire more abandoned rail right-of-way, preserve existing tracks in order to protect the state's rail corridors, increase rail system improvements, and reduce freight movement by highway. The report also stated the Legislature's dismay over the inequitable subsidies to the trucking industry provided by Maine's citizens that undercut competitive rail transportation in the state.

Impact on Infrastructure Damage:

- **Allowing Existing Trucks to Carry More Weight Causes Drastic Increases in Maine's Bridge Damage:** Decades of research and engineering tests, many conducted by state highway departments and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, have shown that small increases in the weights of existing trucks dramatically increased the number of overstressed bridges. Maine is weakening older bridges both on and off the Interstate system, allowing trucks over these bridges that are tens of thousands of pounds heavier than these bridges were originally designed to tolerate.
- **The Maine Department of Transportation Has Deferred Major Highway and Bridge Projects:** Because of a chronic and acute lack of funding, rapidly deteriorating roads and bridges in Maine are not being restored or replaced. This has been documented by the Maine Better Transportation Association, The Road Information Program (TRIP), and the American Society of Civil Engineers 2005 Report Card for Maine. Maine has even deferred its 2006-2007 road improvement program because of a lack of funds. A recent FHWA analysis of Maine's contracted 2004 Wilbur Smith & Associates assessment of bridge impacts of 100,000 pounds, 6-axle overweight trucks showed that the study dramatically underestimates increased damage to Maine's Interstate highway bridges.
- **Allowing Current Trucks To Carry More Weight Dramatically Increases Pavement Damage:** Heavy trucks have been shown in federal, state, and private research and testing to damage pavement at astronomical rates. Almost all road pavement damage is due to heavy trucks, and even small increases in truck axle weights above federal limits cause both the extent and the rate of pavement damage to soar. Maine is currently allowing extra-heavy, 88,000 pounds 5-axle trucks with 44,000 pounds tandem axles and 100,000 pounds 6-axle trucks with 54,000 pounds triple axles on both local roads and on portions of I-95. These trucks are many thousands of pounds above the legal federal limit, operating at weights that inflict severe and extremely rapid damage on roads built to lower weight standards, especially township roads and county collectors. FHWA has calculated that Maine's 100,000 pounds 6-axle overweight trucks inflict more than double the rate of pavement damage than a 5-axle combination truck at 80,000 pounds.
- **Heavy Trucks Do Not Pay Their Fair Share for Destruction of Roads and Bridges In Maine:** Virtually all infrastructure damage is caused by heavy trucks. Maine's own Department of Transportation provided an analysis of vehicle cost responsibilities in response to a 2002 request from the Maine Legislature concerned about highway and bridge damage by extra-heavy trucks. That analysis showed that even trucks weighing only 80,000 pounds were underpaying their fair share of highway destruction by *28 percent each year.* Heavier trucks are even more radically underpaying their fair share. In contrast, Maine DOT's analysis showed that passenger vehicle owners were overpaying their fair share of highway use *by a staggering 36 percent.* Heavier trucks are paying even less of their fair share for highway and bridge destruction. It is clear that Maine's motorists are substantially subsidizing the trucking industry.
- **Allowing Bigger, Heavier Trucks Is Not Matched By Fair Increases in User Fees:** Opening all roads in Maine to longer, heavier trucks causes severe, adverse impacts on bridges and pavement that dramatically increase the cost of reconstructing and rehabilitating these facilities. Maine DOT conducted an updated highway cost responsibility study in 1989 which found that the state needed to substantially increase its fees for big, heavy trucks. Not only were those recommendations never implemented, Maine actually eliminated the special commodity fees for thousands of extra-heavy trucks in the state, thereby even further reducing the cost to industry of using 100,000 trucks in Maine. In addition, Maine refuses to

impose adequate user fees on the trucking industry for its destruction of Maine's roads and bridges, but instead puts the burden on Maine taxpayers. For example, extra-heavy trucks in Maine can get unlimited multiple trip permits on a monthly basis for nominal cost to operate any number of trucks each weighing tens of thousands of pounds more than the state's weight limits.

Impact on Federal Weight Law and Regulation:

- **Allowing 100,000 lbs. trucks on all Maine Interstate highways, along with New Hampshire's Existing Policy Allowing 99,000 Pound Trucks, Will Advance the Trucking Industry's Agenda at the Expense of Public Safety.** In the mid-1990s, the trucking industry pushed for a regionally uniform, higher maximum weight limit for trucks for all Northeastern U.S. states. If this happens, it would then lead to a national effort in Congress to increase the maximum gross weight limit and the maximum axle weight limits in 23 U.S.C. § 127 for all states. Also, trucking industry interests would continue their efforts to artificially hold down or even to reduce user fees for higher weight limits.
- **The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Opposes Legislated Large Truck Size and Weight Exemptions and Higher Truck Sizes and Weights:** The DOT objects to piecemeal legislative actions to federal and state size and weight limits in a major study completed in 2004, specifically mentioning Maine's use of 100,000 pounds trucks as bad public policy. The FHWA in its study *Western Uniformity Scenario Analysis*, April 2004, states that it does not support heavy commercial motor vehicle size and weight increases in general and specifically does not support piecemeal weight law changes such as Maine's use of extra-heavy trucks on I-95.
FHWA also stressed that:
 - ▶ The Maine exemptions actually contribute little to overall trucking industry productivity.
 - ▶ The exemptions may have unintended safety and highway infrastructure consequences.
 - ▶ The exemptions reduce the chances for more comprehensive, planned solutions that would have greater benefits for all Americans and businesses.A recent FHWA analysis of Maine's contracted 2004 published study produced by Wilbur Smith & Associates shows that the study's estimates of bridge and pavement damage and of the benefits of opening all of I-95 to much heavier trucks is riddled with major flaws.
- **Bigger, Heavier Trucks Do not Reduce the Number of Trucks on Our Highways:** No increase in truck sizes and weights has ever resulted in fewer trucks on the road. The National Academy of Sciences in TRB Special Report No. 267 stated that the use of heavier trucks can result in cheaper freight costs that actually produce more freight shipments and further increases in travel by large trucks. The report also pointed out that increase in heavy truck travel could result in truck crashes also increasing.
- **Maine Forecasts a 54 Percent Increase in Giant, Heavy Trucks in the State by 2020:** Despite statements from Maine government officials that bigger trucks mean fewer trucks, the state's own freight predictions show that more and more of these giant trucks will operate both on Maine's Turnpike and on the state's local roads and streets in the near future.
- **National and State Trucking Interests Have Fostered the Belief That Bigger Trucks on I-95 Will Eliminate Giant Trucks on Local Roads:** National and Maine trucking special interest groups have misled Maine's citizens to believe that allowing giant, 100,000 pounds trucks on all of I-95 will eliminate these overweight trucks on local roads and streets. *In fact, Maine's trucking companies have specifically rejected the possibility of reducing the weights of these gigantic trucks on local streets.*