



Issue Update

TRUCK WEIGHT REFORM

Sensible Truck Weight Reform will:

- *Reduce congestion and accident-exposure on local roads*
- *Save fuel and reduce emissions*
- *Improve the U.S. forest industry's global competitiveness*

Problem:

Our nation's federal vehicle weight limit is outdated and out of touch with today's engineering advancements and consumer needs. The 80,000 pound arbitrary truck weight restriction on federal interstates has introduced unnecessary costs and inefficiencies to shippers that use our roadways to deliver products we use everyday. Why? Trucks are hitting the weight limit well before they are filled to capacity, resulting in more truck trips, more congestion on the roads and higher costs for U.S. companies. In the forest products sector, moving harvested trees from forest to facility is over a third of our raw material costs, despite the fact that the entire forest product supply chain has worked tirelessly to wring every cent out of the system through innovation and technology.

Solution:

FRA supports legislation that allows states to open up their portion of the federal interstate system to trucks weighing up to 97,000 pounds with an additional sixth axle. The Safe & Efficient Transportation Act (introduced in the 113th Congress as HR 612), would **NOT** allow longer trucks or combination vehicles. It would simply allow shippers to do more with a truck's existing footprint. As depicted in the comparative picture below, the 97,000-pound truck is the same length and width as the 80,000-pound version, but has one more axle to spread the weight across the rig more effectively and to improve handling and braking.

The reform of gross vehicle weight limits on the federal Interstate system, through the forthcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization, will:

- **Conserve fuel.**
- **Reduce total emissions**, including carbon.
- **Increase productivity** of forest products transport and wood supply management.
- **Enhance safety and reduce traffic congestion** by reducing the volume of trucks now forced to use state roads as primary hauling arteries, due to their exclusion from the Interstate system.
- **Prevent the loss of more U.S. jobs to other countries**, due to our uncompetitive truck weight restrictions.

6-Axle Trucks: Same Size. More Efficient



80,000 5-Axle – displacing 4444 lbs./tire



97,000 6-Axle – displacing 4409 lbs./tire

The thorough Truck Size and Weight Study, which the 2012 Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill ordered the Department of Transportation to conduct, was to have been completed by November 2014, but as of February 2015 DOT had not released results. House and Senate Transportation leaders should urge DOT to ensure that this Study's findings are published well prior to either the Senate's or the House's consideration of 2015 Surface Transportation Reauthorization proposals, to allow for a fair consideration of truck weight reform within those processes.

TRUCK WEIGHT REFORM: ALLEVIATING THE CAPACITY CRISIS

What America is Facing:



Critical Capacity Squeeze: Economic recovery has spurred production, yet highway capacity issues and driver shortages are creating a perfect storm for U.S. shippers. The U.S. population has nearly doubled since the Interstate System was created, and congestion is worsening.



Unprecedented Demand: Demand to ship freight on flatbeds is outpacing the number of available trucks. The American Trucking Associations' Truck Tonnage Index, a bellwether for the state of trucking demand, has reached record highs. Many shippers simply can't find enough trucks to move their products.



Rail Troubles: Railroad delivery issues abound and cause ripple effects for industries across the country. The shale oil boom is causing railroad capacity issues and delaying shipments for a host of vital industries. This has further increased the pressure on truck capacity.

SETA: Modernizing Truck Weights for the 21st Century

**BOTH
TRUCKS
ARE THE
SAME SIZE.**

5-AXLE TRUCK

53-Foot, 5-Axle Truck Traveling at 80,000 lbs.

6-AXLE TRUCK

53-Foot, 6-Axle Truck Traveling at 97,000 lbs.

The Safe & Efficient Transportation Act (SETA):

- ✓ Gives each state the option to set interstate weight limits of up to 97,000 pounds, but only for vehicles equipped with an additional (sixth) axle.
- ✓ The required sixth axle maintains or improves braking capacity, handling characteristics and the current distribution of weight per tire – without changing truck size.
- ✓ The six-axle truck with 22 wheels has a lighter footprint on any given square inch of road surface.

By encouraging the use of safe, higher productivity vehicles,

**SETA Will Make Shipments
Safer, Greener, & More Efficient.**

- Lead to a **25%** reduction in heavy truckloads needed each week.
- Dramatically reduce fuel use & CO2 emissions.
- Reduce congestion & pavement wear.



Safer Roads: The UK set similar weight limits for six-axle vehicles in 2001, and by 2006, heavy truck related fatalities had declined by 35%. In the U.S., Maine officials credit record low highway fatalities to the increased use of six-axle trucks.



Stronger Economy: We can reduce the shipments needed to deliver a fixed amount of goods and make U.S. companies more efficient and productive.



Cleaner Shipping; Cleaner Environment: Six-axle trucks traveling at 97,000 pounds get 17% more ton-miles per gallon. The U.S. DOT estimates that six-axle rigs would save \$2 billion gallons of diesel fuel annually and cut emissions by 19% per ton mile.



Improved Infrastructure: States utilizing the SETA truck configuration are stretching infrastructure dollars and reducing unnecessary pavement damage.

