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Coalition for Transportation Productivity Urges Senate Appropriations Committee to Make ME/VT Truck Weight Pilots Permanent

CTP Sends Letter Citing Maine DOT Report & Other Evidence that New Interstate Weight Limit has Made Roads Safer & More Efficient

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 23, 2010) – The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP), a coalition of more than 160 shippers and allied associations dedicated to responsibly increasing federal weight limits on interstate highways, sent a letter today to members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations. The letter encouraged members to support a provision in the Fiscal Year 2011 Continuing Resolution that makes permanent a pilot program giving heavier, six-axle trucks full access to interstate highways in Maine and Vermont.

In the letter to Committee members, CTP Executive Director John Runyan highlighted the positive impact the truck weight pilot program has had in Maine and Vermont. He also called attention to a report released this week by the Maine DOT, which endorsed the pilot and provided further evidence for making it permanent.

“The program has successfully moved many higher productivity trucks to interstate highways that are safer and better engineered for heavy traffic,” Runyan wrote. “Public officials at every level of government have applauded the pilots, while motorists have noticed that secondary roads have become less congested, and truckers note that their jobs are now safer and more efficient.”

Runyan also cited a study conducted by H.O. Bouchard, a logging and trucking contractor based in Hampden, Maine. H.O. Bouchard measured the impact of the pilot by running two trucks from Hampden to Houlton, Maine. One truck used the interstate, while the other took the secondary roads it was required to use before the pilot program. The truck that used the pre-pilot, secondary road route encountered 86 pedestrian crosswalks, 30 street lights, nine school crossings and 644 oncoming vehicles. The truck using the interstate encountered none of these potential hazards.

Last week, the Obama administration formally asked Congress to make the truck weight pilot program – set to expire in December – permanent. In its request, the Administration said that continuing the program “will improve safety on local roads and increase efficiency of commercial trucking in the region.” Prior to the pilots, introduced last year by Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT), commercial vehicles weighing over 80,000 pounds were often barred from interstate travel and diverted onto state and local roads.

About the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act (SETA)

The Safe and Efficient Transportation Act (H.R. 1799 / S. 3705) would permit states to set interstate weight limits of up to 97,000 pounds for trucks equipped with six axles instead of the typical five. Without making the truck any larger, the additional axle maintains safety specifications, including stopping capability and current weight per tire. SETA would safely make the shipment of heavier cargo more efficient, as many trucks meet the current 80,000-pound federal weight limit with significant space in their rigs. Under SETA, shippers could safely utilize extra cargo space and reduce truck loads, fuel, emissions and vehicle miles traveled for each ton of freight shipped.

SETA was originally introduced in the House of Representatives by Reps. Michael Michaud (D-ME) and Jean Schmidt (R-OH). It currently has 54 cosponsors. In August, Sens. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Herb Kohl (D-Wis.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced identical Senate legislation.

About the Coalition for Transportation Productivity

The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP) is a coalition of shippers and allied associations dedicated to addressing the safety, economic and environmental challenges facing our nation's freight transportation network through carefully crafted truck weight reform. For more information, visit www.transportationproductivity.org.

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