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Contact: **Beth Dozier, 202.429.1833**
bethdozier@rational360.com

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**COALITION FOR TRANSPORTATION PRODUCTIVITY STATEMENT ON
CONFERENCE COMMITTEE DECISION TO EXEMPT MAINE & VERMONT FROM
FEDERAL TRUCK WEIGHT LIMIT**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Last night, a Senate-House conference committee approved language enabling both Maine and Vermont to conduct one-year pilot projects allowing heavier, six-axle trucks full access to the interstate highways within their borders. In September, the Senate passed Sen. Collins' (R-Maine) provision in the Fiscal Year 2010 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill, but it was not part of the bill passed by the House. The Conference Committee included both the Collins amendment and a similar one by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) in the final version of the legislation, which must receive final approval from both the House and Senate.*

John Runyan, executive director of the Coalition for Transportation Productivity, issued the following statement:

“The conference committee’s approval of both Sen. Collins’ and Sen. Leahy’s truck weight pilot projects is a significant step toward improving highway safety and transportation efficiency in Maine, Vermont and the rest of the nation.

“Both pilot projects would harmonize federal and state weight limits, giving trucks full access to interstate systems engineered for commercial vehicles rather than forcing them onto rural roads that wind through small towns. In Vermont, heavier trucks traveling from Canada would no longer need to leave the interstate. And in Maine, heavier trucks traveling on a portion of I-95 known as the Maine Turnpike would no longer be forced back onto secondary roads when they reach Augusta. In fact, consulting firm Wilbur Smith Associates found that opening Maine’s interstates to heavier vehicles would eliminate three fatal crashes per year.

“Not only would the pilot project improve highway safety in Maine and Vermont, but it would create greener roads and a stronger economy. Northeastern producers could consolidate freight on fewer trucks to cut shipping costs and minimize both their fuel use and emissions. The projects will also ease shipment to and from Canada, which already has higher weight limits.

“Most importantly, the pilot project would prove to the rest of the nation that raising the vehicle weight limit for six-axle trucks is a wise way to confront dramatic freight increases and support greener, more efficient shipping. CTP encourages Congress to pass the final bill.”

About the Coalition for Transportation Productivity

The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP) is a coalition of more than 140 shippers and allied associations dedicated to addressing the safety, economic and environmental challenges facing our nation's freight transportation network.

CTP supports the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act of 2009 (H.R. 1799), sponsored by Reps. Michael Michaud (D-ME) and Jean Schmidt (R-OH). The bill would give each state the option to increase its interstate vehicle weight limit to 97,000 pounds for trucks equipped with a sixth axle for safety. The additional axle maintains current braking capacity and weight-per-tire-distribution and minimizes pavement wear. Under the legislation, shippers could more fully fill their rigs to boost shipping efficiency without changing truck size. Additionally, a user fee imposed by the bill would fund vital bridge repair.

For more information, visit www.transportationproductivity.org.

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