Truck Size & Weight

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) required the Department of Transportation (DOT) to conduct a study on truck size and weight limits. DOT's 2016 study addressed the differences in safety risks and infrastructure impacts of various types of trucks. As a result, DOT recommended that no changes in truck size and weight laws be considered until data limitations are overcome. Additional research by Mingo and Burton shows that new configurations, specifically Twin 33-foot trailers, would inflict an additional estimated cost of $5.5-$10.5 billion annually to roads and bridges.

Unfortunately, supporters of increased truck size and weight continue to push for congressional language supporting such changes.

Truck Size

TCA is strongly opposed to the increase in truck length from Twin 28-foot trailers to Twin 33-foot trailers.

- The issue of increasing truck size is a very divisive issue within trucking.
    - In contrast to Less-than-Truckload (LTL) carriers, the truckload segment would yield no advantage from the added cubic feet of space that larger trailers would bring.
- Truckload carriers would have to completely recapitalize their fleets at an exorbitant cost in order to compete with the increased space being utilized by LTL carriers.
    - Ninety-seven percent of the truckload industry is comprised of small businesses. Recapitalization costs would force many of these companies out of business.
    - When the industry experienced previous trailer specification adjustments from 48-foot trailers to 53-foot trailers, the financial burden was dramatic and any change from the current standard of 28- or 53-foot trailers would be no different.
- Twin 33's would add extensive safety risks for professional truck drivers and the motoring public.
    - Breaking apart and reassembling double trailers and using the often 3,000 lb. connecting gear or converter dolly is a high injury activity.
    - Safety concerns that directly impact the motoring public include the near impossibility of reversing these vehicles, the added 22 ft. in stopping distance, the demonstrated poor performance in avoidance maneuvers, and increased propensity for rollover accidents.
- Presently, there is a lack of drivers who hold the doubles/triples CDL endorsement.
    - Trucking consistently falls short in recruiting and retaining qualified drivers. A shift to Twin 33's will only exacerbate this as drivers will have to add a doubles/triples endorsement to their commercial driver's license in order to operate a combination vehicle.
- Adequate truck parking spaces, already a scarcity for our drivers, become increasingly harder to find if Twin 33's become the industry standard.

    - Twin 33-foot trailers will instantly make a vast majority of usable parking spaces that our industry will normally reserve for a tractor and its 53-foot trailer obsolete due to the inability for twin trailers to be put in reverse.
- Intermodal truckload carriers would be put at a disproportionate disadvantage if Congress mandated longer or heavier trailers.
    - Our nation's railroad container cars have been developed to accommodate the most prominent trailer configurations that exist in trucking today. Any change to these trailer configurations will render obsolete not only the existing fleet of tractor trailers across our nation, but also the corresponding counterparts in the rail industry.
    - The financial implications for railroads are staggering. Because larger well cars would likely exceed clearance limits at many bridges, tunnels, curves, and grades, the cost to upgrade this infrastructure to accommodate Twin 33s would cost tens of billions of dollars and would take decades to implement.
    - Because of this diversion of freight from railways and back onto trucks, any potential environmental benefit from Twin 33's would be completely eliminated. Twin 33's will actually contribute to more pollution than trucks on the road today.

Truck Weight

TCA is opposed to any federally mandated increase in truck weight from 80,000 lbs./5 axles to 91,000 lbs./6 axles for the following reasons:

- The high cost to retrofit or add a new trailers with a 6th axle to a fleet;
- Shippers will be reluctant pay additional fees to haul heavier loads;
- Those who currently haul heavier weights by obtaining permits will face a financial hardship;
- The added rolling resistance will erase recent gains made in truck fuel economy;
- The extra axle greatly contributes to higher emissions, making this a poor choice from an environmental standpoint;
- The extra axle would place even more wear and tear on our nation's infrastructure, which is especially negative during a time when the trucking industry is advocating for more infrastructure investment.

Legislation

TCA has repeatedly beaten back language to increase both truck size and weight in congressional legislation. Most often, proponents attempt to attach the language to appropriations bills or infrastructure funding bills. TCA has been successful every time this has come up in the past, but proponents continue pushing for this language to be included.