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COALITION FOR TRANSPORTATION PRODUCTIVITY URGES CONGRESS TO SUPPORT THE SAFE & EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION ACT (H.R. 1799) AND OPPOSE THE SAFE HIGHWAYS & INFRASTRUCTURE PRESERVATION ACT

***CTP Letter to House Members Describes SHIPA's Negative Consequences;
Debunks Myths About Raising the Interstate Weight Limit***

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 29, 2009) – The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP), a coalition of more than 100 shippers and allied associations dedicated to responsibly increasing federal weight limits on interstate highways, sent a letter today to members of the U.S. House of Representatives to encourage their support for the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act of 2009 (H.R. 1799), which would raise the interstate vehicle weight limit for safer, greener, more efficient shipping. The letter also outlined the adverse results of enacting the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (H.R. 1618).

“The Safe and Efficient Transportation Act gives states the authority to utilize heavier vehicles as a way to improve highway safety, reduce fuel use and emissions and give companies the opportunity to cut costs,” said CTP Executive Director John Runyan. “With trucks traveling more miles than ever to meet demand, the bill would make roads safer by enabling shippers to transport more goods with fewer trucks – reducing the vehicle miles traveled to deliver a company’s products.”

The letter from CTP to House members also corrected misinformation about the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act (H.R. 1799) and encouraged Congressional opposition to the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (H.R. 1618).

“There have been false allegations that the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act would put ‘bigger’ or ‘longer’ trucks on interstates. However, the bill would only raise the interstate weight limit for trucks that are the same size as today’s 53’ rigs,” continued Runyan. “Heavier vehicles would simply be outfitted with a sixth axle to maintain stopping distance and braking capacity.

“And while the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act bolsters each state’s right to decide and enforce weight limits that make sense for their jurisdictions, the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act would imprudently freeze the weight limit on all roads in the national highway system,” noted Runyan. “The bill would prevent the use of innovative, heavier weight limits that let states minimize the vehicles and fuel required to deliver goods and feed ports.”

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 allow heavier – not larger – trucks on interstates by giving each state the option to increase its interstate vehicle weight limit to 97,000 pounds for trucks equipped with a sixth axle for safety. Without changing truck size, the additional axle maintains current braking capacity and weight-per-tire-distribution and minimizes pavement wear. A user fee imposed by the bill would fund vital bridge repair.

About the Coalition for Transportation Productivity

The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP) is a coalition of more than 120 shippers and allied associations dedicated to increasing the vehicle weight limit to 97,000 pounds on federal interstate highways for vehicles equipped with an additional axle as a way to address the safety, economic and environmental challenges facing our nation’s freight transportation network. CTP supports a user fee on units equipped with the additional axle to be used for bridge repair. For more information, visit www.transportationproductivity.org.

Please see below for full text of the letter.



Please Support the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act (H.R. 1799) and Oppose the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (H.R. 1618)

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP) and its 120 members nationwide, I would like to encourage your strong support for the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act (H.R. 1799). The bill would give states the ability to implement higher weight limits on interstate highways within their borders. This change would only apply to six-axle, single-trailer trucks traveling where roads and bridges can safely handle the increased load. The purpose of H.R. 1799 is to safely consolidate freight on fewer trucks to improve road safety, reduce emissions, and bolster industry productivity.

While we ask you to support H.R. 1799, we also encourage you to oppose the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (H.R. 1618). This bill would imprudently freeze weight limits not just on federal interstate highways, but on all roads in the national highway system, regardless of whether they are capable of supporting heavier loads. H.R. 1618 will prevent states from implementing pilot projects such as transportation corridors feeding their ports and intermodal facilities – places where innovative, heavier weight limits would minimize the number of vehicles needed to deliver goods. The legislation also usurps a state's ability to consider other local factors before making a decision on weight limit laws.

With truck freight expected to double in the next 25 years, H.R. 1618 would make our highways more crowded and hazardous than they need be and would block vital environmental benefits resulting from higher productivity vehicles. Simply put, H.R. 1618 ignores the importance of a more efficient truck transportation industry to our overall transportation infrastructure.

We'd like to take a moment to address some of the significant misinformation that has surrounded H.R. 1799 and explain why we believe that this legislation will safely and efficiently contribute to a stronger economy in the years ahead.

- **H.R. 1799: Safe, Six-Axle Trucks** – Opponents of the heavier six-axle vehicles have falsely alleged that H.R. 1799 would allow existing five-axle trucks to carry more weight. Instead, the bill requires that a sixth axle be added to trucks so they can safely ship more freight. A six-axle vehicle loaded at 97,000 pounds displaces the same amount of weight per tire and stops at the same distance as the five-axle, 80,000 pound vehicles currently allowed on interstates.

- **H.R. 1799: Heavier, Not Bigger, Trucks** – There have been incorrect allegations that H.R. 1799 would put “bigger” or “longer” trucks on interstates. Six-axle trucks under H.R. 1799 would be no bigger than today’s 53’ rigs; they would simply be better equipped to handle heavier loads so that companies could safely ship freight with fewer truckloads.
- **H.R. 1799: Reduces Infrastructure Costs and Preserves Bridge Safety** – Opponents allege infrastructure repairs will skyrocket under H.R. 1799. This is not true. By not putting any additional weight per tire on roads, and by requiring far fewer trucks to deliver any one company’s product, the bill would reduce wear and tear on interstate pavements. At the same time, a higher permit fee for the heavier trucks would help fund vital bridge repair. The Federal Highway Administration found the higher weight limits for six-axle vehicles would save more than \$2.4 billion in pavement restoration costs over 20 years, and the Wisconsin DOT study predicted significant overall savings from the use of higher productivity trucks as specified in H.R. 1799. Perhaps most importantly, states would remain in full control of determining which bridges in their interstate system could be utilized by higher productivity trucks.
- **H.R. 1799: Will not divert freight from Rail to Truck** – Even if H.R. 1799 is fully implemented nationwide, average railroad rates would still be significantly less expensive than truck rates. A study by the Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation issued in January 2009 predicted no significant displacement of freight rail by trucks with the passage of truck weight limit reform. Shippers need both industries to be as efficient as possible. Furthermore, the path to a more efficient rail industry should not lie in blocking productivity reforms in the trucking industry.

By letting states decide what makes the most sense for roads in their jurisdictions, H.R. 1799 would allow policymakers to confront infrastructure challenges and make their highways safer, greener and more productive in the years ahead.

Please support H.R. 1799, the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act and oppose H.R. 1618, the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act.

Sincerely,

John Runyan
Executive Director
Coalition for Transportation Productivity
www.transportationproductivity.org

