Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 3, 2021

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

As the Committee develops surface transportation infrastructure legislation, we write to express our support for the inclusion of a pilot program that would increase safety on our roads and help mitigate climate pollution from our nation's transportation sector. We urge inclusion of a program that would permit a limited number of states to allow operation of vehicles weighing up to 91,000 pounds gross vehicle weight (GVW) with six axles on Interstate System Highways.

Gross vehicle weight limit laws have not been updated since 1982 despite truck modernization, changes to state and local road allowances and increased demand. Bringing trucking laws into the 21st century will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector, make roads safer for families and drivers, and minimize congestion on state and local roads. Many states already permit trucks that exceed 80,000 pounds to operate on lower classification roads, driving through neighborhoods, by schools, and around other densely populated areas. This ten-state pilot program will shift truck traffic to the Interstate Highway System, reducing the need for trucks to drive on smaller, more hazardous roads.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, states were given the ability to issue permits to allow trucks to operate above federal weight limits on the Interstate Highway System, and many states took advantage of this authority. Companies that operated trucks above 80,000-pounds found that there was no increase in reportable accidents on the heavier configuration. In addition to the safety data collected, participating companies found that the heavier configuration reduced carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions and saved thousands of gallons of diesel and miles traveled.

USDOT's 2015 technical study found that 6-axle trucks operating at up to 91,000 lbs. GVW would reduce fuel consumption, CO2, NOX, and congestion costs.[1] Two other studies found that modern trucks taking fewer trips to carry the same amount of cargo results in lower fuel costs

[1] US DOT Comprehensive Truck Size & Weight Limits Study Technical Reports, Vol. I "Technical Summary Report", June 2015, p. 40

and fewer greenhouse gas emissions.[2] Additionally, a U.S. Department of Transportation study on truck size and weight found that a six-axle, 91,000-pound truck would reduce nitrogen oxides, thus reducing a particulate matter precursor.[3]

This pilot program would allow a state to permit vehicles equipped with six axles that are bridge formula compliant and meet weight-per-axle tests. The additional axle reduces pavement stress by more evenly distributing the vehicle weight and provides additional brakes, increasing stopping power. DOT's most recent study found the 91,000 pound six-axle vehicle handled similarly to the five-axle 80,000-pound GVW vehicle. The study also found that the six-axle vehicle had a one-foot shorter braking distance.

We believe a pilot program is a tailored, pragmatic approach, where state participation would be voluntary. The pilot program would provide the option to participate to up to ten states for a period approximating the useful life of the extra axle trailer that would be needed.

This carefully crafted pilot program provision holds promise for safer and more environmentally friendly trucking. The data that has been collected from companies across the U.S. and by the Department of Transportation supports that there are safety and environmental benefits from operating this particular configuration truck. Accordingly, we believe it is time to move forward with a limited pilot program as we have outlined above. We urge you to include the provision in upcoming legislation. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Sharice L. Davids	John Katko	Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress	Member of Congress	Member of Congress

[2] American Transportation Research Institute and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency suggest a 6-axle, heavier than 80,000-pound vehicle configuration would reduce particulate matter- 2009 Wisconsin Truck Size and Weight Study. Adams et al. A 2009 study by the American Transportation Research Institute found that particulate matter emissions were lower for a six-axle 100,000-pound vehicle that operates on the Interstate when compared to a five-axle 80,000-pound vehicle that operates on a non-Interstate route parallel to an Interstate highway. Tunnell, M.A. Estimating Truck-Related Fuel Consumption and Emissions in Maine: A Comparative Analysis for a 6-axle, 100,000 Pound Vehicle Configuration. Maine Department of Transportation. Augusta, ME. September 2009

[3] US DOT Comprehensive Truck Size & Weight Limits Study Technical Reports, Vol. I "Technical Summary Report", June 2015, p. 40

/s/_____
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

/s/_____
Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

/s/_____
Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/_____
David G. Valadao
Member of Congress

/s/_____
Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

/s/_____
Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

/s/_____
Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress

/s/_____
Ron Kind
Member of Congress