



THE POWER OF A SIXTH AXLE

The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP) recently published a paper on the potential impact of adding a sixth axle to a truck and raising the weight limits of a truck to 97,000 pounds. The current weight limit on five axle trucks has been set at 80,000 pounds for over a quarter of a century. But in the past 25 years there have been many changes in the transportation industry and more changes are on the way. In the next 20 years freight moved by trucks is expected to double. With this will come significant impacts on safety, the environment and infrastructure. Competition for trucks will increase as will freight rates.

There is legislation pending in Congress called the Safe & Efficient Transportation Act (SETA), H.R. 612. This act calls for the modernization of truck transportation weight regulations. SETA gives states the option to safely raise interstate weight limits. This could be done without making trucks any larger if vehicles were equipped with an additional sixth axle. The sixth-axle vehicle will minimize pavement wear because the sixth axle reduces per-tire weight displacement. In addition, new user fees for the six-axle units could fund bridge and road repair. Over the next two decades the U.S. DOT estimates that allowing six-axle trucks to carry more weight on interstate highways will save \$2.4 billion in pavement restoration costs.

The American Transportation Research Institute has reported that six-axle trucks loaded to 97,000 pounds get 17 percent more ton-miles per gallon than five-axle trucks carrying 80,000 pounds. The U.S. DOT estimates that raising the federal weight limit on trucks to 97,000 pounds and adding a sixth axle would save 2 billion gallons of diesel fuel annually and result in a 19% decrease in fuel consumption and emissions per ton mile. In addition to saving fuel it will reduce greenhouse emissions.

The Transportation Research Board determined that a six-axle truck loaded to 97,000 pounds has the same braking distance as an 80,000 pound truck with five axles. Since the United Kingdom raised its gross vehicle weight limit to 97,000 pounds for six-axle vehicles in 2001, fatal truck related accident rates have declined by 35%. More freight has been shipped, but the vehicle miles traveled to deliver a ton of freight has declined.

The new six-axle 97,000 pound trucks would allow American producers to consolidate goods and reduce the number of weekly shipments. It will also spur investment in upgraded equipment, create jobs and transition the U.S. to a more efficient transportation network. U.S. gross vehicle weight limits are among the lowest of all industrialized nations. Canada, Mexico and most European nations already employ higher vehicle weight limits.

Progressive shippers who are concerned about their future transportation costs should be supportive of the CTP and Safe & Efficient Transportation Act (SETA), H.R. 612.

Our Professional Services team stands ready to support you in controlling your transportation expenses and freight cost analysis. Please contact Leif Holm-Andersen, Executive Director of Professional Services at Leif.holm-andersen@data2logistics.com or +1 239 425 8050.