

September 10, 2015

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Norton:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to provisions which endanger road safety in the DRIVE Act (H.R. 22), the Senate surface transportation reauthorization legislation passed on July 30, 2015. As the House begins to consider its own long-term reauthorization bill, we urge you to stop the dangerous and deadly safety rollbacks as well as include needed improvements to safety standards. While a multi-year highway reauthorization is important to the American public, it should not be achieved at the expense of lives, injuries and taxpayer dollars.

As Congress continues consideration of the surface transportation reauthorization, it is critical that the safety of the public be at the forefront of the discussion. There is an urgent need for safety improvements on our highways for truck drivers as well as those with whom they share the road. Truck crash deaths are up significantly - increasing by 17-percent over four years (2009-2013). The injury numbers are even more alarming, with a 28-percent increase in injuries sustained from large truck crashes. On average, 4,000 people die in truck crashes and 100,000 people are injured each year at an annual cost of more than \$99 billion, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Congress must do all it can to reverse these trends.

Although big trucks account for only 4 percent of U.S. registered vehicles, they are dramatically overrepresented in fatal crashes. Large trucks were responsible for 28 percent of all fatal work zone crashes in 2013. Furthermore, in crashes between a large truck and a passenger car, 98 percent of the fatalities were people in the passenger vehicle. Clearly, this is a critical safety problem. Yet, despite clear and compelling evidence of a need for safety improvements, commonsense solutions such as a requirement for technological improvements to large trucks that would prevent numerous crashes each year, like mandating crash avoidance and mitigation technologies, were left out of the DRIVE Act.

This issue should be especially concerning to you considering some of the facts about large truck crashes in your state:

- Ninety-five percent (95%) of the District of Columbia's major roads are in poor condition.
- Large trucks were involved in 15% of fatal crashes in the District of Columbia in 2012.
- Motor vehicle crashes cost the District of Columbia \$1 billion per year, approximately \$1,659 per capita.

Many of the provisions in the DRIVE Act were a win for the trucking industry and a major loss for safety. For example, the bill would allow 18 to 20 year old drivers to operate 80,000-lb. trucks across state lines. This misguided attempt to address a truck driver shortage will put all road users in jeopardy as evidence clearly shows that young drivers are at a higher risk for being involved in crashes. Truck safety is already

getting worse, and allowing inexperienced teen truckers to operate interstate will only exacerbate a growing problem.

Yet, another unsafe proposal being supported by corporate trucking interests relies heavily on industry-funded “junk science” – mandating double 33 tractor-trailers. This proposal has widespread opposition from truck crash victims and survivors, public health and safety organizations, law enforcement, short line railroads, labor, and 18 major trucking companies. Further, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a strong recommendation for no increases to truck size and weight due to insufficient data. Senator Feinstein (D-CA) and Senator Wicker (R-MS) proposed an amendment that would require a DOT study on safety before Congress could allow such a massive change of national policy. The study being touted by proponents of this change was funded by FedEx and others who stand to make massive profits as a result of the length increase. Despite their misleading claims, the Federal Highway Administration Truck Size and Weight Study Technical Reports show that a Double 33 has a 33-percent increase in low-speed off-tracking, a six-foot wider turning radius, and an additional 22-feet of stopping distance. This would not be safer for any motorist, bicyclist, pedestrian, construction worker, or police officer who uses our roads on a daily basis.

It is critical that Congress enact a multi-year highway bill with a strong safety title. The public expects no less. You have a critical opportunity to support sound and sensible legislation that will save lives, prevent injuries, and contain crash costs.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gouge
Washington, D.C.
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Cousin of Amy Corbin
Killed in a truck crash 8/18/97

Ron Wood
Washington, D.C.
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition
Son of Betsy Wood, Brother of Lisa Wood Martin, Uncle of Chance, Brock, and Reid Martin
Killed in a truck crash 9/20/04

Teamsters Local 639

Amalgamated Transit Union

Truck Safety Coalition

Road Safe America

America Walks

The John Lindsay Foundation

The League of American Bicyclists

Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

Traffic Safety Coalition

Parents Against Tired Truckers

