

At the last session of the Iowa Legislature, there was discussion of some modification of state law in regard to size and weights of vehicles using the highways, and it is likely that future Legislatures will consider such questions.

The Iowa Highway Commission is charged with the responsibility of representing the citizens of the state with regard to their highway system, and inasmuch as the proper evaluation of proposals for weight or dimension increase involves some technical capacities not readily available to the general public, it seems appropriate for the Highway Commission to give careful consideration to this matter and make known its position in regard thereto.

II. Present Federal Law

The Federal Aid Highway Act provides that the Interstate system may not be used by any vehicle carrying weight in excess of 18,000 pounds on any one axle or carrying weight in excess of 32,000 pounds on any tandem axle. It further provides that no vehicle may use the Interstate highway system that has a total gross weight in excess of 73,280 pounds or that has a total width in excess of 96 inches unless the laws of the state as they existed prior to July 1, 1956, allowed greater weight or greater width than those stipulated in the Federal Aid Highway Act.

III. Present Iowa Law and Other States' Laws

The Code of the State of Iowa has similar provisions to those contained in the 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act. The Iowa law provides that no vehicle may use the highway if it has a width in excess of 96 inches, no axle may weigh more than 18,000 pounds, that any tandem axle must not weigh in excess of 32,000 pounds and the maximum gross weight of any vehicle using the highway is 73,280 pounds. All these provisions are in complete agreement with the 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act.

The close agreement between the Federal Aid Highway Act and the Code of the State of Iowa is not unique. Most states similarly agree with the 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act. As of December 31, 1967, 48 of the states provided for 96 inches as the maximum width of a vehicle. Thirty-two of the states limited the axle load to 18,000 pounds. Twenty-three of the states limited the tandem axle load to 32,000 pounds. Thirty-two of the states specified that the maximum gross vehicle weight must be 73,280 pounds, or less.

It is thus apparent that Iowa is well in keeping with the majority of the states in regard to vehicle weights and dimensions. Iowa does not represent an obstruction to cross-country traffic inasmuch as our limitations are very similar to those imposed by other states.

IV. Proposed Changes in Federal Law

New legislation has been proposed in the federal Congress which would change these weight limitations so far as the Interstate highway system is concerned. The new limitations which have been proposed allow a 20,000 pound single axle, a tandem axle weighing 36,000 pounds and a width of vehicle of 102 inches plus additional width as necessary for safety devices, tire bulge, etc. In addition, gross weight of vehicle would be increased substantially and would be dependent upon the overall length of the vehicle.

V. AASHO Recommendations

The American Association of State Highway Officials has made recommendations to the Congress with regard to maximum dimensions and weights of motor vehicles. Covering these same items of dimensions and weights the American Association of Highway Officials has recommended 102 inches in width, and 20,000 pounds single axle load, such 20,000 pounds to include all weight tolerances. These two stipulations are similar to that of the proposed federal legislation.

AASHO has further recommended that tandem axles shall not exceed 32,000 pounds in total weight. In addition to this, the AASHO recommendation for total gross weight of vehicle is somewhat less than is proposed in the federal legislation.

The AASHO recommendations carry other statements which are worthy of consideration. The AASHO recommendations state that it is the intent that these limits shall be applicable to "completed portions of the Interstate system and other designated highways." The AASHO recommendations do not contemplate across-the-board approval of these new dimensional limitations. The AASHO recommendations say that before any application is made to other than