

But if Congress enacted a Federal length limit that might be considered reasonable in the East, the West could again be prevented from making any progress, although progress in that area is fully justified and badly needed.

On the other hand, adoption of a Federal limit designed to accommodate the conditions and needs of the West could be construed as a congressional endorsement of such lengths everywhere.

We fully agree with the Department of Transportation which, in its testimony in the Senate, recommended against a Federal length limit at this time. DOT stated:

While there is a regional trend developing on this (length) subject presently there is no nationwide consensus regarding appropriate vehicle lengths.

The Department is presently conducting studies in this area. Until the studies have been completed and sufficient objective data reviewed, we think this question is best left to the individual States to decide in the light of their particular geographic and traffic needs and problems.

Such studies and experiments also are being conducted by the industry, by both the operators and the manufacturers of truck equipment. The task is to develop, within the framework of the axle limits and the gross weight formula adopted to protect the roads and bridges, safe and economical vehicles suitable to the needs and conditions of different parts of the country.

Like the Department of Transportation, we strongly urge that any consideration of a Federal length limit or limits be deferred at least until the current research and experimentation has been able to provide all of us with more facts and information.

There are, of course, other aspects of vehicle design and operation in addition to those related directly to the four areas covered by the provisions of the pending legislation. One of these, of great importance, is highway safety.

The trucking industry is dedicated to safety on the highway and is proud of its achievements.

The industry has been subject to Federal and State safety regulations covering both the design and operation of vehicles for more than 30 years.

Last year, the area of Federal authority was expanded through establishment of the National Traffic Safety Bureau in the new Department of Transportation. This is in addition to the long-existing authority of the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety which, for many years, was a part of the Interstate Commerce Commission and now has been transferred to the Department of Transportation.

These agencies, with the powers existing in the Interstate Commerce Act since 1935, plus the expanded powers written into the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, have comprehensive authority to deal with the complex and highly technical questions of highway safety as it relates to both vehicle design and operation.

We assure the committee that any vehicles that could be operated under the provisions of the proposed legislation will be as safe as, or safer than, the equipment now operated. Moreover all safety regulations, both Federal and State, applicable to equipment now being operated would apply equally to any vehicles operating under the limits set forth in the proposed bill.

Since safety is such an important consideration, we have prepared a supplemental statement which treats in some detail with this subject as well as the trucking industry's record of performance.