

This letter states the position of the Connecticut State Highway Department with regard to proposed increases in the maximum permissible vehicle size and weights. I urge the Committee on Public Works to exercise caution before legislating any increase in vehicle weights.

This letter is forwarded to you for your information and consideration with regard to the position I have indicated.

Very truly yours,

HOWARD S. IVES,
State Highway Commissioner.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT,
Wethersfield, Conn., February 8, 1968.

Subject: Vehicle weights and sizes.

Senator JENNINGS RANDOLPH,
Chairman, Committee on Public Works,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR RANDOLPH and Members of the Committee on Public Works: The Senate Committee on Public Works has scheduled hearings to be held on February 19, 20 and 21 on the matter of vehicle sizes and weights, the subject of Senate Bill 2658, a bill to amend Section 127, Title 23, U.S.C.

One provision of this bill would increase the maximum permissible vehicle width from the present 96" to 102". Connecticut statutes presently permit a width of 102". Thus this proposed increase would not present any difficulty in Connecticut.

Provision is also provided in this bill to increase vehicle weights as follows: single-axle weight from present 18,000 lbs. to 20,000 lbs.; a tandem-axle weight from the present 32,000 lbs. to 36,000 lbs., with an overall gross weight to be

determined by the gross weight formula $W = 500 \left(\frac{LN}{N-1} + 12N + 40 \right)$.

Connecticut statutes presently permit a single-axle weight of 22,400 lbs. and a tandem-axle weight of 36,000 lbs. Furthermore, gross vehicle weights are limited as follows: two-axle, 32,000 lbs; three-axle 53,800 lbs; four-axes 67,400 lbs; and five or more axes 73,000 lbs.

Due to the recent bridge disaster at Point Pleasant, West Virginia, and also due to the additional bridge maintenance encountered by this department in recent years, the subject of vehicle weights is one in which we have great concern. While the proposed legislation would establish gross weights on the basis of a formula which would include "length", there is no provision in the Federal legislation which establishes a maximum vehicle length. It would seem, therefore, that if the formula were to be used, length should be added to the bill in some way. I might comment, however, that we here in the Connecticut Highway Department are not completely sold on the use of this formula.

While the Connecticut State Highway Department is sympathetic to the desires of the trucking industry to increase vehicle sizes and weights, it is our opinion that such legislation should await the results of the investigation of the Point Pleasant disaster, and further to await the results of studies presently under way by the various bridge and structures people throughout the country. Some of the thinking is that the results of the current studies may suggest a change in design criteria for future construction. However, we have on the ground today innumerable bridges built to both current and even older designs. Certainly, before we destroy these bridges we had better consider what their maximum capacities are, and then if necessary, a long-term procedure for rehabilitating them in accordance with the current studies and possible future weight limitations.

As presently written Senate Bill 2658 includes a "grandfather clause" which would permit higher weights presently allowed by current State statutes to continue in effect. Connecticut would certainly want this provision of the statutes to remain.

In summary therefore, I would strongly urge the Committee on Public Works to wait until our engineers complete the various studies under way before legislating any increase in vehicle weights.

Very truly yours,

HOWARD S. IVES,
State Highway Commissioner.