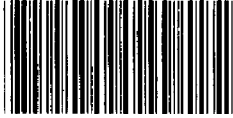


UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
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STATEMENT OF
HENRY ESCHWEGE, DIRECTOR
COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

BEFORE THE
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
OF THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON

[TRUCK WEIGHT AND ITS EFFECT ON HIGHWAYS]

H4102

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO DISCUSS OUR REVIEW OF THE EXTENT OF HEAVY AND OVERWEIGHT TRUCKING AND THE IMPACT ON THE NATION'S HIGHWAYS. THE RESULTS OF THIS REVIEW ARE IN OUR REPORT ENTITLED "EXCESSIVE TRUCK WEIGHT: AN EXPENSIVE BURDEN WE CAN NO LONGER SUPPORT" (CED 79-94) WHICH THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL ISSUED TO THE CONGRESS LAST WEEK. I WILL SUMMARIZE THE MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THAT REPORT.

HIGHWAY DETERIORATION

HIGHWAYS ARE A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF OUR LIVES. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE DETERIORATING AT AN ACCELERATED PACE. UNFORTUNATELY, SUFFICIENT FUNDS ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO MEET EITHER CURRENT NEEDS OR FUTURE REQUIREMENTS.

IN 1977, THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REPORTED THAT THE NATION'S HIGHWAY PAVEMENT CONDITION HAD DECLINED FROM GOOD IN 1970 TO FAIR IN 1975. IT ALSO REPORTED THAT

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EXCLUDING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE, STATES NEED OVER \$18 BILLION TO OFFSET DETERIORATION ON THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM THROUGH 1996. STATES TOLD US THEY WILL NEED AN ADDITIONAL \$67 BILLION OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS TO MEET SIMILAR NEEDS ON NON-INTERSTATE ROADS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THEIR STATE HIGHWAY AGENCIES. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING OUR HIGHWAYS FOR FUTURE USE IS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE FACT THAT SINCE 1956, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS INVESTED OVER \$96 BILLION.

CLEARLY, HIGHWAY DETERIORATION STEMS FROM MANY CAUSES WHICH ARE NOT READILY CONTROLLABLE INCLUDING WEATHER, LACK OF MAINTENANCE FUNDS, AND THE INEVITABLE AGING PROCESS. HIGHWAYS ARE HANDLING MORE TRAFFIC THAN THEY WERE DESIGNED FOR--ESPECIALLY HEAVY TRUCK TRAFFIC WHICH CAUSES MOST TRAFFIC-RELATED DETERIORATION. SINCE ALL HEAVY TRUCKS CONTRIBUTE TO HIGHWAY DETERIORATION, GETTING RID OF OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS WOULD NOT STOP TRUCK-RELATED DETERIORATION, BUT IT WOULD CERTAINLY REDUCE THE RATE. HOWEVER, BY STRICTLY ENFORCING WEIGHT LAWS, STATES COULD VIRTUALLY ELIMINATE DAMAGE CAUSED BY OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS.

THE NUMBER OF OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS USING OUR HIGHWAYS AND THE AMOUNTS BY WHICH THEY ARE OVERWEIGHT IS SUBSTANTIAL. FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION DATA SHOWS THAT ABOUT 22 PERCENT OF ALL LOADED TRACTOR-TRAILERS EXCEED STATE WEIGHT LIMITS, ^{and} THE PERCENTAGE RANGES AS HIGH AS 81 PERCENT FOR OTHER TYPES OF TRUCKS. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SITUATION

IS APPARENT BECAUSE, AS CONFIRMED BY OFFICIALS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS, A FIVE-AXLE, TRACTOR-TRAILER--THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF TRACTOR-TRAILER--LOADED TO THE 80,000-POUND FEDERAL LIMIT, HAS THE SAME IMPACT ON AN INTERSTATE HIGHWAY AS AT LEAST 9,600 AUTOMOBILES. *In addition,* ~~MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOWEVER,~~ AS TRUCK AXLE WEIGHTS INCREASE, PAVEMENT DAMAGE INCREASES AT AN EVEN FASTER RATE.) FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE A TRUCK AXLE CARRYING 18,000 POUNDS IS ONLY 9 TIMES HEAVIER THAN A 2,000-POUND AUTOMOBILE AXLE, IT DOES 5,000 TIMES MORE DAMAGE. A 20,000-POUND AXLE--THE FEDERAL LIMIT FOR A SINGLE AXLE--DOES 7,550 TIMES AS MUCH DAMAGE AS A 2,000-POUND AXLE. INCREASING TRUCK AXLE WEIGHTS ABOVE THE CURRENT FEDERAL LIMITS WITHOUT UPGRADING HIGHWAYS AND INCREASING MAINTENANCE WILL ESCALATE DAMAGE.

ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE IMPACT OF HEAVY TRUCKS ON PAVEMENT AND BRIDGES CAN BE DEMONSTRATED BY THE EFFECT OF THE 1975 INCREASE IN FEDERAL WEIGHT LIMITS. THE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION ESTIMATED THAT THIS 10 PERCENT INCREASE COULD INCREASE TRAFFIC-RELATED PAVEMENT DAMAGE BY UP TO 35 PERCENT. STATE OFFICIALS TOLD US THAT ONLY 63 PERCENT OF THE INTERSTATE MILEAGE CAN HANDLE CURRENTLY ALLOWABLE TRUCK WEIGHTS AND TODAY'S TRAFFIC VOLUME WITHOUT REDUCING HIGHWAY LIFE. SIMILARLY, HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION DATA SHOWS THAT ONLY 15 PERCENT OF THE INTERSTATE BRIDGES CAN CARRY THESE TRUCK WEIGHTS WITHOUT ALSO REDUCING THEIR SERVICE-ABLE LIFE.

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SUPPORTED THE INCREASED FEDERAL WEIGHT LIMITS, AND WAS AWARE THAT THESE INCREASES WOULD REQUIRE ADDITIONAL SPENDING TO OFFSET THE RELATED HIGHWAY DETERIORATION. ITS CURRENT PROGRAM IS NOT SUFFICIENT, HOWEVER, TO FUND IDENTIFIED NEEDS, AND IT HAS NOT REQUESTED ADDITIONAL INTERSTATE REHABILITATION PROGRAM FUNDS. THE LONGER THE DEPARTMENT WAITS TO MEET THESE NEEDS AND DEAL WITH THE IMPACT OF THE 1975 WEIGHT INCREASE, THE HIGHER THE EVENTUAL COST WILL BE. WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE SECRETARY REQUEST ADEQUATE FUNDING TO MEET THESE NEEDS.

FUEL EFFECTS OF TRUCK WEIGHTS

WHILE INTERSTATE WEIGHTS WERE INCREASED TO SAVE FUEL FOR HEAVY TRUCKS, THERE IS NO ASSURANCE THAT THE 1975 INCREASE OR ANY FUTURE INCREASES WILL REDUCE CONSUMPTION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS. WHILE THERE MAY BE SOME DIRECT FUEL SAVINGS ON HEAVIER TRUCK SHIPMENTS, THESE SAVINGS WILL BE REDUCED OR POSSIBLY ELIMINATED BECAUSE:

- (1) ALL VEHICLES USE MORE FUEL ON DETERIORATED HIGHWAYS;
- (2) MAINTAINING AND RESURFACING DETERIORATED PAVEMENTS (MAKING, HAULING, AND APPLYING ASPHALT) WILL REQUIRE ADDITIONAL FUEL;
- AND (3) EACH HEAVIER TRUCK WILL USE MORE FUEL.

RECENT STUDIES HAVE NOT VALIDATED CLAIMS THAT INCREASED WEIGHTS WOULD LESSEN OVERALL FUEL USE. FOR EXAMPLE A 1977 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STUDY SHOWED THAT:

- A 10 PERCENT INCREASE IN WEIGHT LIMITS WOULD REDUCE TOTAL DIRECT TRANSPORTATION FUEL CONSUMPTION LESS

THAN 1 PERCENT (ACTUALLY BETWEEN .18 AND .37 PERCENT) ANNUALLY BUT EVEN THESE FUEL SAVINGS WOULD BE SOMEWHAT OFFSET BY INCREASED HIGHWAY DETERIORATION.

--AT 40 MILES PER HOUR FUEL CONSUMPTION INCREASES BY 34 PERCENT ON BADLY BROKEN PATCHED ASPHALT AS COMPARED TO HIGH QUALITY PAVEMENT.

WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE DEPARTMENT IN THE WEIGHT LIMIT STUDY REQUIRED BY THE FEDERAL AID HIGHWAY ACT OF 1978 SHOULD:

--DETERMINE THE NET FUEL CONSUMPTION RESULTING FROM THE IMPACT OF HEAVIER TRUCK WEIGHTS TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THAT ALL VEHICLES USE MORE FUEL ON DETERIORATED HIGHWAYS AND FUEL IS USED IN MAINTAINING AND REPLACING THESE HIGHWAYS.

--IDENTIFY THE ECONOMIC EFFECT OF CHANGES IN WEIGHT LAWS, THE COST AND BENEFITS, WHO WILL PAY THE COSTS, AND WHO WILL RECEIVE THE BENEFITS.

--DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF ANY WEIGHT LIMIT CHANGE ON THE CURRENT HIGHWAY USER TAX STRUCTURE AND WHAT CHANGES MAY BE NEEDED TO ASSURE EQUITABLE ALLOCATION OF COSTS.

REVISED FEDERAL LEGISLATION

ALTHOUGH EXCESSIVE TRUCK WEIGHT IS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO HIGHWAY WEAR, FEDERAL WEIGHT LIMITS DO NOT APPLY TO AT LEAST 95 PERCENT OF THE FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS. THESE NON-INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS--THERE ARE 768,000 MILES--ARE THE LARGEST

AND OLDEST, PORTION OF THE FEDERAL-AID SYSTEM. BECAUSE THESE HIGHWAYS GENERALLY HAVE LOWER LOAD-CARRYING CAPABILITY, THEY ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO DAMAGE BY HEAVY TRUCK WEIGHTS. CURRENTLY 27 STATES HAVE LIMITS HIGHER THAN FEDERAL LIMITS IN AT LEAST ONE WEIGHT CATEGORY--SINGLE AXLE, TANDEM AXLE, OR GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT.

A GRANDFATHER CLAUSE IN EXISTENCE SINCE ORIGINATION OF FEDERAL WEIGHT LIMITS IN 1956 STIPULATES THAT TRUCK WEIGHTS WHICH WERE PERMISSIBLE IN INDIVIDUAL STATES AS OF JULY 1, 1956, CAN REMAIN IN EFFECT INDEFINITELY. THEREFORE, EVEN THE 5 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S HIGHWAYS COVERED BY FEDERAL WEIGHT LIMITS, THE 42,000-MILE INTERSTATE SYSTEM, MAY HAVE WEIGHTS EXCEEDING FEDERAL MAXIMUMS.

AS A RESULT, AT LEAST 20 STATES HAVE LIMITS HIGHER THAN FEDERAL WEIGHT LIMITS IN AT LEAST ONE WEIGHT CATEGORY ON THEIR INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS. BECAUSE OF THESE AUTHORIZED EXCEPTIONS, FEDERAL LIMITS DO NOT APPLY ON ALMOST 13,000 MILES, OR 32 PERCENT OF THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM. THE VARYING STATE WEIGHT LIMITS CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR INTERSTATE TRUCKERS AND MAKE STATE WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS MORE DIFFICULT.

SOME STATES HAVE IMPLICIT AUTHORITY UNDER THE GRANDFATHER CLAUSE TO ISSUE PERMITS AND EXEMPTIONS FOR TRUCKS TO ROUTINELY EXCEED NORMAL STATE WEIGHT LIMITS EVEN THOUGH THE LOADS COULD EASILY BE DIVIDED AND HAULED WITHIN

NORMAL LIMITS. THESE PERMITS USUALLY ALLOW AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF TRIPS OVER LONG PERIODS OF TIME AND UNDOUBTEDLY RESULT IN MILLIONS OF UNNECESSARY EXCESSIVELY HEAVY TRUCK SHIPMENTS EACH YEAR. WHILE PERMITS AND EXEMPTIONS PROVIDE ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO SOME SHIPPERS OR INDUSTRIES, THEY CAUSE UNNECESSARY ACCELERATED DAMAGE WHICH IS PAID FOR BY ALL HIGHWAY USERS. THIS SITUATION IS NOT ONLY INEQUITABLE, BUT IT SERIOUSLY DETRACTS FROM THE STATES' ABILITY TO PROTECT HIGHWAYS FROM DAMAGE CAUSED BY EXCESSIVE TRUCK WEIGHTS.

TO PROTECT THE LARGE FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN THE NATION'S HIGHWAYS, WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE CONGRESS AMEND 23 U.S.C. 127 AS FOLLOWS:

- MAKE FEDERAL WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS, INCLUDING THE NONINTERSTATE SYSTEM.
- ESTABLISH A TERMINATION DATE FOR THE APPLICABILITY OF THE GRANDFATHER CLAUSE PROVISIONS, SO THAT CURRENT FEDERAL LIMITS WOULD APPLY TO ALL FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS.
- INCLUDE A PROVISION THAT SPECIFICALLY PROHIBITS OVERWEIGHT EXEMPTIONS AND PERMITS ON THE FEDERAL-AID SYSTEM, EXCEPT FOR (1) THOSE PERMITS NECESSARY FOR SINGLE TRIPS OF CARGOES THAT CANNOT BE REDUCED TO MEET WEIGHT LIMITS OR BE SHIPPED BY OTHER TRANSPORTATION MODES AND (2) EXEMPTIONS NECESSARY FOR

CERTAIN SPECIALIZED HAULING VEHICLES.

APPENDIX I OF OUR REPORT CONTAINS OUR SPECIFIC PROPOSAL FOR REVISING FEDERAL TRUCK WEIGHT LEGISLATION.

OVERWEIGHT OPERATIONS

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION DATA AND OUR REVIEW AT SELECTED SITES SHOWS THAT OVERWEIGHT TRUCKING IS NOT AN UNCOMMON PRACTICE. WE OBTAINED SHIPPING RECORDS AND VISITED SELECTED ACTIVITIES WHERE COMMODITIES BEING TRANSPORTED WERE OF A HEAVY AND DENSE NATURE. WE FOUND NUMEROUS INSTANCES OF ROUTINE OVERWEIGHT OPERATIONS. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

--90 PERCENT OF 179 GRAIN DELIVERIES TO A TEXAS PORT FACILITY EXCEEDED STATE WEIGHT LIMITS. ONE TRUCK WEIGHING 38,040 POUNDS MORE THAN THE STATE GROSS WEIGHT LIMIT HAD TRAVELED OVER 470 MILES.

--65 PERCENT OF 107 TRUCKS HAULING SAND AND GRAVEL IN OHIO WERE OVERWEIGHT. THE AVERAGE EXCESS WEIGHT WAS 10,395 POUNDS.

WE ALSO FOUND THAT FEDERAL CONTRACTORS SHIP AND RECEIVE CARGOES IN TRUCKS EXCEEDING STATE WEIGHT LIMITS. IN TESTIMONY BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE IN 1977, TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY ROUTINELY PURCHASED COAL DELIVERED IN CONTRACTORS' TRUCKS THAT EXCEEDED STATE WEIGHT LIMITS. WE CONFIRMED THE CONTINUATION OF THIS PRACTICE AND FOUND EXAMPLES IN OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES INCLUDING THE U.S.

FOREST SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, AND THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION. FOR EXAMPLE:

--80 PERCENT OF 112 ROCK DELIVERIES TO A CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROJECT ON THE RED RIVER EXCEEDED ARKANSAS WEIGHT LIMITS.

--TWENTY-EIGHT TRUCKS DELIVERING CRUSHED STONE TO A FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN TEXAS WEIGHED AN AVERAGE OF 110,000 POUNDS--30,000 POUNDS OVER TEXAS' 80,000-POUND GROSS WEIGHT LIMIT. THE LOWEST GROSS WEIGHT WAS 99,520 POUNDS.

ALTHOUGH STATES ARE PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR ENFORCING THEIR OWN WEIGHT LAWS, FEDERAL AGENCIES SHOULD COOPERATE WITH STATE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS.

WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, IN COOPERATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FORMULATE A GOVERNMENT WIDE POLICY, INCLUDING ANY NEEDED IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION, TO PREVENT TRUCKS FROM EXCEEDING APPLICABLE STATE WEIGHT LIMITS WHEN SHIPPING CARGOES FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES.

WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT

AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, STATES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENFORCING THEIR OWN WEIGHT LAWS. FEDERAL LAW REQUIRES THEM TO DO SO ON ALL FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS WITHIN THE STATE. STATES MUST ANNUALLY CERTIFY THAT THEY ARE ENFORCING THEIR

WEIGHT LIMITS AND PROVIDE THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION DOCUMENTING THEIR EFFORTS. IF THE SECRETARY DETERMINES THAT A STATE IS NOT ADEQUATELY ENFORCING THESE LIMITS, HE MUST REDUCE THAT STATE'S SHARE OF FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY FUNDS BY 10 PERCENT.

THUS FAR, (THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT PROVIDED THE GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE NECESSARY TO IMPROVE STATE WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT, ^{and}) A MORE AGGRESSIVE FEDERAL EFFORT TO HAVE STATES CONTROL TRUCK WEIGHT IS WARRANTED TO GUARANTEE THAT TAXPAYERS' INVESTMENT IN OUR HIGHWAYS IS PROTECTED.

STATE WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS ARE OFTEN INSUFFICIENT TO PREVENT OVERWEIGHT TRUCKING. FOR EXAMPLE:

- STATE AGENCIES ENFORCE WEIGHT LAWS ON ONLY 40 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S HIGHWAYS.
- THERE IS LITTLE WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT IN URBAN AREAS.
- MOST FINES FOR OVERWEIGHT VIOLATIONS ARE TOO LOW TO BE EFFECTIVE DETERRENTS.
- MOST PERMANENT SCALES ARE INEFFECTIVE BECAUSE THEY ARE EASILY AVOIDED.

IT WAS ALSO OBVIOUS THAT THE ^V LEVEL OF EFFORT COMMITTED TO WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT VARIES GREATLY FROM STATE TO STATE.)

MANY STATE EFFORTS APPEAR TO BE MINIMAL AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW EFFECTIVE WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT COULD RESULT FROM THESE EFFORTS.

THE DEPARTMENT HAS RECENTLY PROPOSED NEW CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING THE ADEQUACY OF STATE ENFORCEMENT. DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS TOLD US THAT THE WIDE RANGE OF STATE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IS THE BEST REASON FOR SEPARATE EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EACH STATE AND THAT EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS WILL RESULT FROM THEIR CURRENT APPROACH. WE DOUBT THAT THESE PROPOSED PROCEDURES WILL ASSURE ADEQUATE ENFORCEMENT ON A NATIONAL BASIS BECAUSE THEY WOULD RESULT IN 50 DIFFERENT SETS OF CRITERIA AND 50 DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ENFORCEMENT. THIS WOULD POSE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IN EVALUATING THE ADEQUACY OF STATE PROGRAMS ON A NATIONAL BASIS AND IN APPLYING THE AVAILABLE SANCTIONS FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.

BECAUSE OF THE SCOPE OF TRUCKING OPERATIONS, ONLY A NATIONAL EFFORT CAN EFFECTIVELY DISCOURAGE OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS. THE DEPARTMENT MUST PROVIDE THE IMPETUS NEEDED TO IMPROVE STATE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS BY ESTABLISHING AS MUCH UNIFORMITY AS POSSIBLE IN THE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING STATE WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS. BUT, BECAUSE OF VARIANCES AMONG THE STATES, THE EVALUATION CRITERIA SHOULD BE BROAD ENOUGH TO ALLOW STATES TO MEET THE CRITERIA IN THE MANNER BEST SUITED TO THEIR PARTICULAR SITUATIONS. GIVEN ADEQUATE LEVELS OF ENFORCEMENT AND EFFECTIVE DETERRENTS, LEGITIMATE DIFFERENCES IN STATE PROGRAMS SHOULD NOT PRECLUDE EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT.

WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT REQUIRES STRINGENT PENALTIES, EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS, ADEQUATE RESOURCES, AND INNOVATIVE

ENFORCEMENT TECHNIQUES. WHILE THE ELEMENTS OF SUCH A PROGRAM EXIST TODAY, THEY ARE SCATTERED AMONG 50 SEPARATE STATE PROGRAMS. MANY STATES CAN IMPROVE THEIR CURRENT ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS BY INCORPORATING EFFECTIVE PENALTIES, METHODS, AND ORGANIZATIONS CURRENTLY USED IN OTHER STATES.

AMONG THE PENALTIES WE BELIEVE WOULD BE EFFECTIVE DETERRENTS TO OVERWEIGHT OPERATIONS ARE:

--MANDATORY FINES, GRADUATED ON A RATE BASED ON THE AMOUNT OF EXCESS WEIGHT AND HIGH ENOUGH TO OFFSET THE PROFITS FROM ROUTINE OVERWEIGHT OPERATIONS.

--MANDATORY OFFLOADING OF EXCESS CARGO.

--MAKING SHIPPERS EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERWEIGHT VIOLATIONS.

WE IDENTIFIED SEVERAL EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES FOR APPREHENDING OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS. THESE INCLUDE:

--ALLOWING ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS TO DIRECT SUSPECTED OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS TO THE NEAREST SCALE, ESPECIALLY THOSE ON ROUTES BYPASSING PERMANENT SCALES.

--IMPROVING USE OF PERMANENT SCALES BY OTHER TECHNIQUES SUCH AS (1) USING PORTABLE SCALES ON BYPASS ROUTES, (2) MAKING SURE NEW PERMANENT SCALES WILL BE LOCATED AT SITES THAT ARE NOT EASILY BYPASSED, AND (3) OPERATING EXISTING SCALES AN OPTIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS.

--USING PORTABLE SCALES AT SHIPPERS' AND RECEIVERS' FACILITIES WHICH FREQUENTLY USE OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS.

--USING ENFORCEMENT FILES TO IDENTIFY CHRONIC VIOLATORS.

WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ^{DOT} *chd*
DIRECT THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR TO DEVELOP, IN
COOPERATION WITH THE STATES, A MODEL STATE WEIGHT ENFORCE-
MENT PROGRAM. ^{It} *It* SHOULD ADDRESS ALL WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT
CERTIFICATION CRITERIA AND INCLUDE EFFECTIVE WEIGHT ENFORCE-
MENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES, METHODS, EQUIPMENT, AND LAWS.
THE PROGRAM SHOULD CONTAIN AN EFFECTIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORK THAT
PROVIDES VIABLE ALTERNATIVE MEASURES TO APPREHEND VIOLATORS
AND DETER OVERWEIGHT OPERATIONS. ✓

THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TRUCK WEIGHT
ENFORCEMENT HAVE BEEN EXPANDED BY RECENT HIGHWAY LEGISLATION.
AS A RESULT, THE DEPARTMENT NEEDS TO ESTABLISH A SMALL FULL-
TIME OPERATING GROUP TO ADMINISTER WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT DUTIES
AND SUPPLY THE PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE
POLICY AND TECHNICAL PROBLEMS CERTAIN TO ARISE FROM TRUCK
WEIGHT ISSUES AND THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS. SUCH A GROUP
WOULD ALSO PROVIDE ONGOING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO STATE
PROGRAMS.

SAFETY

ALTHOUGH OUR REVIEW FOCUSED ON TRUCK WEIGHTS, WEIGHT-
RELATED TRUCK SAFETY ISSUES CANNOT BE IGNORED. *(meanwhile, safety issues should not be ignored.)* THE PUBLIC
IS BEING EXPOSED TO INCREASING VEHICLE SIZE AND WEIGHT
DIFFERENTIALS AS AUTOMOBILES GET SMALLER AND LIGHTER, WHILE
TRUCKS BECOME LARGER AND HEAVIER.)

IN 1969, THE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR TOLD A CONGRESSIONAL
COMMITTEE THAT HE DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH RELIABLE INFORMATION

TO COMMENT ON THE SAFETY ASPECTS OF A PROPOSED WEIGHT INCREASE. AS OF JULY 1979, THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT RELEASED ITS DRAFT REPORT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUCK WEIGHT AND ACCIDENTS.

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION GENERALLY AGREED WITH OUR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CONGRESS ON CHANGES TO THE FEDERAL LAW. THE DEPARTMENT AGREED IN PRINCIPLE WITH OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON WAYS TO IMPROVE THE FEDERAL WEIGHT ENFORCEMENT ROLE. HOWEVER, THERE WERE CERTAIN AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT AND A LACK OF COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENT THEM. FINALLY, THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET AGREED WITH OUR RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT FEDERAL CONTRACTORS FROM USING OVERWEIGHT TRUCKS.

DETAILED AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATIONS ARE INCLUDED IN OUR REPORT.

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MR. CHAIRMAN, THIS CONCLUDES MY STATEMENT. WE WILL BE GLAD TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.