



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

October 12, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter provides an update on the Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Research Roadmap, as requested in Senate Report 115-138, accompanying the *Department of Transportation Appropriations Act, 2018*, Public Law (P. L.) 115-141, enacted March 23, 2018. The specific language was as follows:

*Research*—FHWA’s April 2016 “Truck Size and Weight Limits Study” revealed data limitations that hampered efforts to conclusively study the effect of changing the size and weight of various truck configurations. While there are inadequate performance data from the operational use of these vehicles in a number of States, the Committee is aware of ongoing efforts between the Department, the NAS, and the Transportation Research Board to develop a Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Research Plan. The Committee is also aware of an ongoing study to synthesize and compare past work, empirical models, and current legal operation of twin 33-foot trailers, LCVs, and other configurations. Should the Department find that there is a lack of available data, the Committee directs the Department to work with the State departments of transportation to establish best practices for data collection relating to truck configurations. The Department is directed to incorporate those practices and begin accumulating such data to supplement the ongoing Research Plan. The Committee directs the Secretary to finalize the Research Plan within one calendar year of the enactment of this act, and to submit a report on the results of this effort to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations within 30 days of completion. The Committee further directs the Secretary to submit a report on the status of this effort to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations no later than 180 days after the enactment of this act.

Pursuant to the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21)* (P.L. 112-141), Section 32801, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) submitted the Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study (CTSWLS) to Congress in April 2016. Due to model and data limitations, the technical results of the CTSWLS could not accurately be extrapolated to confidently predict national impacts from changes in Federal truck size and weight laws. Therefore, CTSWLS did not provide definitive evidence to support any specific new change of direction in the areas of truck size and weight limitations. The CTSWLS did help identify the areas in which we need to know more. To make a genuine, measurable improvement in the

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Implementation of this recommendation began with FHWA engaging the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Transportation Research Board (TRB) in March 2017 to develop a truck size and weight limits research roadmap. The FHWA provided input to the NAS TRB Team to help identify current or planned research efforts as well as data needs and other gaps to be addressed by the research roadmap.

To produce the research roadmap, NAS TRB is implementing a multi-step process that involves:

- Collecting, compiling, and synthesizing relevant background information.
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- Drafting an interim report.
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The NAS TRB anticipates delivery of the final research roadmap to FHWA and public release in October 2018.

An interim report from NAS TRB, *First Report: Candidate Research Topics; Framework for Setting Priorities*, was released on April 16, 2018. It is enclosed with this letter and available at <http://nap.edu/25091>. The report summarizes research recommendations from prior related studies; presents potential methods to evaluate alternative truck size and weight regulatory structures and candidate research topics, by problem statement, for the five topic areas; and identifies prioritization criteria for the research roadmap.

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Sincerely,

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Elaine L. Chao

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

October 12, 2018

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

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Elaine L. Chao

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

October 12, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Elaine L. Chao

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

October 12, 2018

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Lowey:

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Elaine L. Chao

Enclosure



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WASHINGTON, DC 20590

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Chairman  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
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Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
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Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
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The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
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Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Diaz-Balart:

This letter provides an update on the Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Research Roadmap, as requested in Senate Report 115-138, accompanying the *Department of Transportation Appropriations Act, 2018*, Public Law (P. L.) 115-141, enacted March 23, 2018. The specific language was as follows:

*Research.*—FHWA’s April 2016 “Truck Size and Weight Limits Study” revealed data limitations that hampered efforts to conclusively study the effect of changing the size and weight of various truck configurations. While there are inadequate performance data from the operational use of these vehicles in a number of States, the Committee is aware of ongoing efforts between the Department, the NAS, and the Transportation Research Board to develop a Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Research Plan. The Committee is also aware of an ongoing study to synthesize and compare past work, empirical models, and current legal operation of twin 33-foot trailers, LCVs, and other configurations. Should the Department find that there is a lack of available data, the Committee directs the Department to work with the State departments of transportation to establish best practices for data collection relating to truck configurations. The Department is directed to incorporate those practices and begin accumulating such data to supplement the ongoing Research Plan. The Committee directs the Secretary to finalize the Research Plan within one calendar year of the enactment of this act, and to submit a report on the results of this effort to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations within 30 days of completion. The Committee further directs the Secretary to submit a report on the status of this effort to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations no later than 180 days after the enactment of this act.

Pursuant to the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21)* (P.L. 112-141), Section 32801, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) submitted the Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study (CTSWLS) to Congress in April 2016. Due to model and data limitations, the technical results of the CTSWLS could not accurately be extrapolated to confidently predict national impacts from changes in Federal truck size and weight laws. Therefore, CTSWLS did not provide definitive evidence to support any specific new change of direction in the areas of truck size and weight limitations. The CTSWLS did help identify the areas in which we need to know more. To make a genuine, measurable improvement in the

CTSWLS advised that a more robust study effort should start with the design of a research program to identify the areas, mechanisms, and practices needed to establish new data sets and models to advance the state of practice. The CTSWLS also recommended focusing this research framework on five topic areas: safety, compliance/enforcement, modal shift, bridges, and pavement.

Implementation of this recommendation began with FHWA engaging the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Transportation Research Board (TRB) in March 2017 to develop a truck size and weight limits research roadmap. The FHWA provided input to the NAS TRB Team to help identify current or planned research efforts as well as data needs and other gaps to be addressed by the research roadmap.

To produce the research roadmap, NAS TRB is implementing a multi-step process that involves:

- Collecting, compiling, and synthesizing relevant background information.
- Convening a series of expert panels representing perspectives from academia, research, and industry, aligning with the five topic areas. The panels helped to identify and provide feedback on the roadmap's recommended research priorities and projects, as well as ongoing, related research to avoid duplication.
- Drafting an interim report.
- Drafting the roadmap and soliciting an independent peer review.
- Finalizing the roadmap to incorporate feedback from the peer review.

The NAS TRB anticipates delivery of the final research roadmap to FHWA and public release in October 2018.

An interim report from NAS TRB, *First Report: Candidate Research Topics; Framework for Setting Priorities*, was released on April 16, 2018. It is enclosed with this letter and available at <http://nap.edu/25091>. The report summarizes research recommendations from prior related studies; presents potential methods to evaluate alternative truck size and weight regulatory structures and candidate research topics, by problem statement, for the five topic areas; and identifies prioritization criteria for the research roadmap.

In a parallel and related effort, FHWA is developing an analysis of recent operational experiences of twin 33-foot trailers to further advance the state of knowledge of this alternative truck configuration. This analysis, which is anticipated to be completed in 2018, was initiated to help address a gap in the CTSWLS, which lacked information on emerging industry usage of this new truck configuration.

To widely disseminate the information included in the final research roadmap, NAS TRB anticipates holding public briefings once the final research roadmap is published. The FHWA will alert Congress of the specific schedule for these briefings. Once DOT has received the final roadmap, the Department will review it for potential action, including prioritization of research areas and consideration of funding needs.

Similar letters have been sent to the Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations; the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations; the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Appropriations; and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elaine L. Chao". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "E".

Elaine L. Chao

Enclosure



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

October 12, 2018

The Honorable David Price  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Price:

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*Research.*—FHWA’s April 2016 “Truck Size and Weight Limits Study” revealed data limitations that hampered efforts to conclusively study the effect of changing the size and weight of various truck configurations. While there are inadequate performance data from the operational use of these vehicles in a number of States, the Committee is aware of ongoing efforts between the Department, the NAS, and the Transportation Research Board to develop a Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Research Plan. The Committee is also aware of an ongoing study to synthesize and compare past work, empirical models, and current legal operation of twin 33-foot trailers, LCVs, and other configurations. Should the Department find that there is a lack of available data, the Committee directs the Department to work with the State departments of transportation to establish best practices for data collection relating to truck configurations. The Department is directed to incorporate those practices and begin accumulating such data to supplement the ongoing Research Plan. The Committee directs the Secretary to finalize the Research Plan within one calendar year of the enactment of this act, and to submit a report on the results of this effort to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations within 30 days of completion. The Committee further directs the Secretary to submit a report on the status of this effort to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations no later than 180 days after the enactment of this act.

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knowledge needed for these study areas, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) in its CTSWLS advised that a more robust study effort should start with the design of a research program to identify the areas, mechanisms, and practices needed to establish new data sets and models to advance the state of practice. The CTSWLS also recommended focusing this research framework on five topic areas: safety, compliance/enforcement, modal shift, bridges, and pavement.

Implementation of this recommendation began with FHWA engaging the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Transportation Research Board (TRB) in March 2017 to develop a truck size and weight limits research roadmap. The FHWA provided input to the NAS TRB Team to help identify current or planned research efforts as well as data needs and other gaps to be addressed by the research roadmap.

To produce the research roadmap, NAS TRB is implementing a multi-step process that involves:

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Elaine L. Chao

Enclosure