# TOO BIG TO BE GREEN

## Giant Trucks are Dirty and Damaging

Certain shippers and trucking companies want a license to put huge triple-trailer trucks and gigantic single-trailer trucks on highways from coast to coast. They claim bigger trucks will mean fewer trucks on our roads, increase fuel efficiency and be good for the environment.

*But nothing could be further from the truth*. Mountains of research reveal that longer, heavier trucks lead to:

- more truck traffic;
- more fuel consumption; and
- more emissions, including greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and particulate matter

### Super-Sized Trucks and Environmental Harm

Trucks account for less than six percent of the miles driven by highway vehicles in the United States, but they are responsible for:

- one-quarter of smog-causing pollution from highway vehicles;
- more than one-quarter of the particulate matter or "soot" from highway vehicles; and
- more than one-tenth of America's oil consumption.[i]

***Bigger trucks mean more trucks.*** Today, 53-foot truck trailers are standard — and triple trailers and long double trailers, or "longer combination vehicles" (LCVs) — can stretch to 120 feet. That's like a 10-story building, laid on its side, and running down the road at more than 60 miles per hour.

Contrary to industry assertions, increasing truck size and weight creates more truck transportation, not less. In 1982, Congress passed a law raising the maximum allowable weight limit for trucks on interstate roadways to 80,000 pounds. Despite the increased weight limit, the total number of miles traveled by combination trucks more than doubled between 1982 and 2006.[ii] Why? Because increasing truck size and weight lowers overall operating costs and gives big trucking companies a competitive advantage over other modes.

***Bigger trucks mean more fuel consumption.*** When weight and length limits are increased, the bigger rigs are less fuel-efficient. A five- or six-axle combination truck weighing 100,000 pounds rather than 80,000 pounds suffers a 10.4 percent reduction in diesel fuel mileage.[iii]

Because these bigger rigs divert freight from other transportation modes, including those that are more fuel efficient, the amount of fuel burned to move a freight shipment also increases. On a single gallon of fuel, railroads can move cargo nearly four times as far as giant trucks. And other forms of commercial transport are much less energy-intensive than big-truck transport. In 2002, for example, rail consumed 11.6 times less energy per ton-mile and water commerce consumed 8.5 times less energy per ton-mile than heavy-truck transport.[iv]

***Bigger trucks mean more pollution***. Heavy trucks account for one-third of U.S. mobile source Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) emissions and nearly a quarter of mobile source particulate matter (PM) emissions, also known as "soot."[v]

***Bigger trucks mean more global warming pollution.*** Heavy trucks account for six percent of the nation's global warming pollution. In 2007, transportation accounted for 28 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions — and 21 percent of those emissions were from freight trucks. The heavier the truck, the more greenhouse gases are emitted. Since 1990, the rate of growth of greenhouse gas emissions from freight sources has increased more than *twice as fast* as emissions from passenger sources. This is, in part, a result of emissions associated with heavy-duty trucks. (US Environmental Protection Agency.)

## Take Action for Safe Highways, Clean Air and a Healthy Planet

The Blue Green Alliance (BGA) supports sensible limits on truck size and weight to reduce congestion, decrease fuel consumption and cut pollution. Amid proposals by shippers and large trucking companies for more gas-guzzling triple-trailers and massive single-trailer trucks weighing up to 97,000 pounds, the BGA supports the *Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act* (SHIPA, H.R. 1618 and S. 779) SHIPA will extend the existing Interstate truck size and weight restrictions to all 161,000 miles of the National Highway System (NHS).Specifically, this legislation will:

- Limit truck weights to 80,000 pounds throughout the National Highway System;
- Freeze the operation of LCVs on our nation's highways;
- Restrict the length of truck trailers to 53 feet; and
- Close loopholes that allow super-sized trucks to spread across the country.

The Blue Green Alliance urges you to co-sponsor and support this important legislation, which will dramatically reduce air pollution and global warming emissions.

## For More Information:

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**Endnotes**

[i] Union of Concerned Scientists.

[ii] Federal Highway Administration.

[iii] Environment America.

[iv] Department of Energy.

[v] *Assessing the Effects of Freight Movement on Air Quality at the National and Regional Level,* Federal Highway Administration, Office of Natural and Human Environment, April 2005.