

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

COUNTY COURTHOUSE

311 Grand Avenue, Suite #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010



COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Carol Frazey
Kaylee Galloway
Kathy Kershner

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

May 10, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Larsen
United States House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell, and Congressman Larsen,

The Whatcom County Council writes to convey our opposition to legislation that would increase both the maximum weight and sizes of tractor-trailer trucks on the road today.

Our primary concern with heavier and longer commercial trucks is the impact on traffic, safety, and infrastructure. Federal increases could lead to bigger trucks and heavier loads ending up on our county-maintained roads and bridges, which are not built to the same standards as interstates or federal highways. Commercial trucks frequently use county roads to complete trips (known as "first mile, last mile"), connect with warehouses, or avoid traffic clogged freeways like I-5.

A recent study by the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks (CABT) found that 91 non-interstate bridges in Whatcom County would not be able to safely accommodate 91,000-pound trucks, as has been proposed as a pilot project in the recently introduced HR 471. According to the study, this would result in a cost of over \$112 million in replacement and repair of bridges to accommodate these trucks. We have attached a one-pager on CABT's study for Washington's 2nd congressional district, including Whatcom County.

Locally, we are all aware of the potential catastrophic impacts of improperly loaded trucks. You may remember nearly a decade ago, the I-5 bridge over the Skagit River collapsed due to an oversized truck – although this was due to height, bridges all of over the country are put out of service due to heavier loads that can severely impact the bridge's structural integrity.

There are also a number of column safety issues to consider. The USDOT's findings on longer double trucks, known as "Twin 33s", show that they take 22 feet longer to stop when compared to the "Twin 28s" that we see on the road today, not to mention additional issues with bigger blind spots and tricky merging situations. Longer trucks would have an outsized impact on motorist safety on I-5 and the interior roads these trucks use to exit, which are often times maintained by the county. Furthermore, longer trucks interrupt multimodal commerce such as not being able to stack two containers per rail car. This also impacts the carbon footprint of transportation.

We appreciate your work on behalf of Whatcom County and hope that you understand our concerns. Please oppose any sweeping federal mandates that would increase trucks size and weight on either interstates or roads maintained by state or local governments. Public safety and integrity of our critical infrastructure is a top priority of our county's agenda. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Barry Buchanan, Chair
Whatcom County Council