

*Photo from Alaska Dept. of Transportation*



# SB 218: VEHICLE WEIGHT PERMITS

# THE ISSUE: AN OVERVIEW

- Alaska has the second worst roads in the country—only preceding New Jersey
- Alaska's roads are incredibly expensive to maintain
- Heavy vehicles cause exponentially more damage to roads and bridges than standard vehicles
- Heavy vehicles are harder to control on the roads
- Heavier vehicles burn more fuel, which can be harmful to our environment

*James Dalton Hwy. Photo from the Constant Rambler*



## THE WHY BEHIND SB 218

If passed, SB 218 would establish a process that would require vehicles heavier than 140,000 lbs. to purchase a special permit to allow them on the roads.

The income from these permits would be used for road maintenance to make up for damages caused by larger vehicles.



*Vehicles of all sizes on an Alaskan Highway. Photo from Vehicle Shipping Alaska via Parcel Path*

# ALASKA'S ROADS: SECOND TO WORST IN THE U.S.

- How do you gauge the quality of roads?
  - Alaska's roads are in poor condition *and* expensive to maintain
  - Permafrost
  - Combined data from bridge quality, fatalities, vehicle spending per mile, and bridge quality
  - Data collected from the Reason Foundation's 25<sup>th</sup> *Annual Highway Report* via the Alaska Policy Forum

*McCarthy Road. Photo from Alaska Tour and Travel*





# THE COST OF MAINTAINING ALASKA'S ROADS

- High costs of materials and labor combined with unique obstacles make Alaska's highways the most expensive in the U.S. to maintain
  - \$129,620 per VMT (Vehicle Mile Traveled)
  - Runner up is West Virginia, which pays \$28,289—only approximately 22% of Alaska's VMT expenditure
- Sources of funding
  - Most states rely on tolls and taxes—Alaska primarily relies on federal and state funding
  - Alaska's 8 cent per gallon fuel tax—the lowest in the U.S.
  - Over 50 years since last increase to fuel tax
  - Implementing permits for vehicles >140,000 lbs. can help collect revenue and allow everyone to share the road

*Construction on the Seward Highway southbound offramp at Dowling Rd. Photo from the Anchorage Daily News.*

# IMPACTS OF HEAVIER VEHICLES ON OUR ROADS & BRIDGES



*Aftermath of truck collision with Glenn Hwy. bridge in 2018. Photo from Anchorage Daily News*

- Ongoing Infrastructure crisis going on in the U.S. – Why not preserve what we already have?
- The Generalized Fourth Power Law – a rule of thumb for comparing the amount of pavement damage caused by vehicles of different weights, in terms of axle loads

$$\left(\frac{W_1}{W_2}\right)^4 = \left(\frac{5 \text{ tons}}{1 \text{ ton}}\right)^4 = 625$$

# SAFETY CONCERNS

- Alaska's roads are some of the most dangerous roads in the U.S. due to unpredictable and extreme weather
- Heavier trucks are harder to control, especially on icy roads
- More weight means more wear and tear on the vehicles themselves, making them more likely to crash
- Heavier trucks are more likely to roll and be involved in more severe crashes



*Aftermath of a fatal collision between a sedan and semitruck on Airport Way, Fairbanks. Photo from the Fairbanks Daily News Miner.*



## ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

- Interior Alaska faces preexisting issues with air quality
  - Non-compliant with EPA standards
- Impact of diesel burning vehicles carrying heavier loads



# NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN OPPOSITION TO TRUCK SIZE AND WEIGHT INCREASES

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According to the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks (CABT), the following are against bigger/heavier trucks:

- Coalition Against Bigger Trucks (CABT)
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- National Association of Police Organizations
- National Sheriffs' Association
- National Troopers Coalition
- National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
- Towing and Recovery Association of America
- Institute for Safer Trucking
- AAA
- GoRail
- National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Assn.
- Railway Engineering-Maintenance Suppliers Assn.
- Railway Supply Institute
- American Public Works Association
- National Association of Counties
- National Association of County Engineers
- National Association of Towns and Townships
- National League of Cities
- The United States Conference of Mayors
- General Federation of Women's Clubs
- Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- SMART Transportation Division
- American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association
- Association of American Railroads

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QUESTIONS?