

Senate Bill 218 "An Act relating to Vehicle weight limits"  
Senate Transportation Committee  
Public Testimony

I am providing written testimony in support of SB 218, An Act Relating to Vehicle Weight Limits, with a recommended amendment. I offer my testimony having over 50 years experience owning and driving commercial trucks primarily in Alaska including the use of long heavy doubles.

Consideration for this Act has three main components, Safety, Infrastructure Protection, and Cost to Benefit Analysis. It should be noted that this Act primarily affects just one aspect of the trucking industry and that is the use of Long Combination Doubles, known as LCVs.

**SAFETY** - It is known and documented by federal highway studies that trucks with double trailers and heavier trucks are involved in more accidents than single trailer trucks and those accidents cause more injuries and deaths. From my experience it takes more skill and attention to operate LCV trucks and the heavier the trucks are the more skill is required. When drivers are operating combinations that could be 120 feet long with unlimited weight, many factors affect control including weather, other traffic, and road conditions. When things go wrong it happens fast and the longer and heavier the truck is makes it harder to regain control. Safety and operating risk go hand in hand and at some point a reasonable limit to the overall weight must be imposed.

**INFRASTRUCTURE** - Public highways and bridges are designed and built to withstand a limited weight. Many factors control how much weight a asphalt road can withstand but bridges have a limit to their weight capacity. Newer bridges are built with greater load capacities but many of the existing bridges in Alaska have lower ratings. To put it in context, the three long span WWII bridges built on the Alaska Highway were designed for a 70,000 lb maximum load but today the DOT manipulates those rating using a Bridge Law allowing more weight with more axles. The Alaska bridge law doesn't conform to the federal standards and the DOT is relying on the over engineered safety standards used in construction to permit overloading. Other bridges including the Richardson Chena Flood Crossing, Chena River Bridge in Fairbanks, and the MP5 Steese Highway bridge among others are all underrated for the heavier loads being transported. Rather than limit the maximum GVW weight allowed, the DOT is proposing to replace these fully functional bridges at a great cost. Limiting the GVW weight limit to 140,000 lbs will allow these bridges to remain in use for many years to come and release STIP funds for a better purpose.

**COST TO BENEFIT** - The idea that consumer goods will cost more if truck weights are limited to 140,000 lbs is not true. Most of the goods and materials used by Alaskans are shipped from Seattle to our oceanside ports. The maximum weight for containers and flatbed loads to be loaded on ships or barges is around 50,000 lbs because of Washington state weight restrictions. When loaded in Alaska as doubles combined with the weight of tractor and trailer, they will not exceed 140,000 lbs. Even with that most carriers prefer to have a lighter load on the rear trailer for stability and winter driving. The bulk materials loaded in Alaska, like fuel, gravel, etc are generally loaded to a limit of around 140K because of driver skill, handling, and equipment limitations. The excessively heavy loads evident on the highways are generally hauling for industrial customers who can well afford a modest increase in freight rates if necessary. And to finalize the argument of cost-to-benefit, heavy loads do not justify a elevated safety risk to the traveling public nor an detrimental impact on the infrastructure.

## Proposed amendment to SB 218

*delete:* Section AS 19.10.060(e) within the body of the proposed bill which allows a permit to exceed the GVW weight for a fee.

It is noted that the DOT Weights and Measures division already has a regulatory procedure to allow overweight and oversize vehicles. A carrier can apply for a permit to transport a overweight load through application which if granted can establish equipment requirements, routing to protect bridges, speeds, signage, and other measures to protect the traveling public.

Granting a permit through section (e) defeats the purpose of a weight limit. The modest fee attained ignores the documented safety concerns of unregulated heavy loads and the potential damage to the road and bridges that unrestricted heavy trucks can cause.

It is finally noted that Alaska is the only state or province in North America that doesn't impose a maximum limit on unpermitted transportation. Unrestricted there is almost no limit to what a truck can weigh if they put enough axles under it and that can cause damage and unsafe conditions. It's time for common sense legislation to protect the traveling public and the infrastructure we all drive on.

Submitted by:

Bill D. Ward

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**From:** Ronald Smith  
**Sent:** Friday, March 8, 2024 10:16 AM  
**To:** Senate Transportation Committee  
**Subject:** vehicle weight limits

already critics are pointing out that the bill doesn't actually establish what fees should apply for overweight loads. The principle is good and the details about fee structure can be discussed on the floor of the legislative chambers.

Your job is to act in the interests of the public and fairly determine the fee structure for overweight loads that erode our roads faster than standard passenger trucks and cars.

Ron Smith  
Fairbanks AK 99708

Senator Kawasaki and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee:

**I write to you today in support of SB218.**

I was surprised when I learned that Alaska has no upper weight limit for vehicles on its roads. This is not the case in other states, and for good reasons. They have wisely determined that heavy vehicles that cause the most damage should help pay more than lighter vehicles for the repair of that damage.

We know through many studies, including the Kinney Engineering Corridor Study being currently conducted for the Alaska, Richardson and Steese Highways, that heavy trucks do cause the majority of pavement damage. (Source:

<https://cdn.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/d9a3b471879e4fe797d9ad32cdcc49ec/resources/wExE7mdRU4UXRN0p4gEvy.pdf>)

We also know from experience that melting permafrost causes pavement failure, making it more susceptible to damage from heavy loads and increasing the cost of maintenance of our roads.

And while we await for the determination by the Federal Highway Administration on the outcome of our STIP request, it is clear that we may have to repair our existing roads and bridges for longer than we thought before we will have the money to replace them.

You may be interested in listening to a very recent recording of Mr. Rick Van Nieuwenhuysse, President and CEO of Contango Ore, telling investors that the Manh Choh mine will certainly be in production longer than the 4-5 year timeframe they originally promised and that the next mine coming up (Lucky Shot near Hatcher Pass) will follow the same development plan and truck ore up the Parks Highway to Ft. Knox. His remarks from earlier this month can be found at <https://www.contangoore.com/media/contango-ore-red-clouds-pre-pdac-2024>

**In light of the increases we are now seeing in heavy truck traffic related to ALL natural resource development, I urge you to seriously consider the need for updated legislation that will more equitably recover the cost of maintaining our transportation infrastructure.**

Thank you for your service to Alaska.

Mary Farrell

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Riley von Borstel

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**From:** Kitty Lancaster <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 10, 2024 1:35 PM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Subject:** Support for Senate bill 218

**Follow Up Flag:** FollowUp  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Senator Kawasaki,

I want to show my support for Senate bill 218, which aims to establish weight limits on Alaskan roads. Section 1 (d) states the loaded gross weight of a vehicle or combination of vehicles on a highway under the department jurisdiction may not exceed 140,000 pounds... without a permit issued in accordance with this section.

I believe this is a good start to holding overweight trucking companies responsible to share the burden of excess damage and repair costs they create on Alaska's, fragile, highway and bridge infrastructures.

There also needs to be an upper weight limit restriction on trucks that exceed the 140,000 pound limit, without just adding more tires to disperse weight of an already overweight vehicle.

To quote an analogy: A cat can have kittens in the oven but it doesn't make them biscuits. ie. you can put more tires on an overweight truck, but it doesn't make them less heavy going over Alaska's bridges that are not rated for these grossly overweight trucks.

It is inevitable that two or more of these overweight trucks will be crossing our bridges at the same time, and disaster will ensue.

Alaska has a limited number of roads that support our residents livelihood and commerce.

Department of Transportation, Alaska Highway Safety Office (AHSO), has a mission statement on their website promising: To enhance the health and well-being of Alaska's people, through programs, aimed at saving lives, and preventing injuries on Alaska highways.

Weight limits and number of oversize trucks traveling daily should also be properly regulated as well, "To save lives, and prevent injuries on Alaska highways"

I hope our Government and the Department of Transportation will uphold this promise.

Sincerely,  
Kathleen Lancaster

Sent from my iPhone

## Riley von Borstel

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**From:** Hal & Carol Meyer [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 10, 2024 7:58 AM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 218

**Follow Up Flag:** FollowUp  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Hi Senator Kawasaki

I'm adding my name to the list of Alaskans who are supporting Senate Bill 218, that is proposing to set weight limits on Alaska highways.

I see no positive outcome for Alaskans from the ore haul from Mancho Mine to Fort Knox. Road damage, air quality issues and safety are just a few of the reasons for my concern. This bill will at least make an attempt at minimizing damage on the Richardson/Steese highways. Thank you for your consideration on this bill.

Carol Meyer  
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

## Riley von Borstel

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**From:** Luci Beach [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 9, 2024 11:01 AM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Cc:** Luci Beach  
**Subject:** Support of S.B. 218 re vehicle weight limits

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Senator Kawasaki,

I fully support S.B. 218 to limit vehicle weight limits. Without such restrictions we are endangering lives and infrastructure. Foreign corporations have no right to dictate what they can do on Alaska's roads for the benefit of few while shouldering the costs to future generations.

Thank you for looking out for Alaskans.

Sincerely,  
Luci Beach M.A.

## Riley von Borstel

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**From:** Barry Santana <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 8, 2024 10:00 PM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Subject:** SB118

**Follow Up Flag:** FollowUp  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Senator Kawasaki,

I received an email from Advocates for Alaska Safe Highways regarding support for SB118. I am in full support, but was very surprised it was such a short bill. I approve of the fact that finally Alaska may have a load limit for our highways and bridges. I have been working with the group regarding the Kinross Ore Haul B-Trains; in particular on how the trucks will impact the bridges. Bridge loading is particularly susceptible to axle loading, tire pressure, and also **axle spacing**. Your bill covers the single axle load, number of tires and tire pressure. It will certainly help highway maintenance and prevent pavement damage. Bridge susceptibility to heavy loads may not be as well protected. Several of the bridges in the Interior are of 1940's vintage and fabricated from very old steel alloys.

ADOT&PF have procedures to comply with standard highway and bridge loading and have in the past complied with AASHTO code requirements. However, the governor has gone off the rails for the Kinross Gold ore haul and appears to be not only stretching compliance with standard recognised code values but also imposing on his Commissioner to change decisions made by State engineers. In attempting to research and familiarize SB118 references to AS 19.10.060, I discovered that the ADOT document "Chapter 25 Operations, Wheeled Vehicles" has been recently revised and states "Includes New Regulations Effective January 11, 2024".

My question is: how has the bill taken into consideration what "17 AAC 25.012. Legal Vehicle Size" of the document states, and how the bill will influence that document. One section on page 5: 17 AAC 25.013. Legal Vehicle Weight prescribes a 20,000 pound single axle load with 2, 3, and 4-axle groups loading with minimum spacing. That is a standard HS-20 axle load.

I believe you are in for a very stiff fight with the governor. He does not appear to believe in the laws of physics, only what he needs those laws to be. I am a retired structural engineer who worked the latter part of my career for ARCO Alaska on the North Slope.

Barry Santana, PhD PE



## Riley von Borstel

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**From:** Connie Zachel <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 12, 2024 12:01 AM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Subject:** SB218

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

I'm totally in favor of placing weight restrictions on trucks. The Manh Choh trucking fiasco makes it very clear that DOT, the Governor, and others who are allowing these huge trucks on our roads and bridges are insensitive to the hazards, the public's concerns, and the expenses passed on to Alaskans. Apparently due to the lack of regulations, Kinross and Black Gold are doing nothing illegal. That's a poor excuse for a bad plan. So you and our legislative branch are our hope for sanity.

I am grateful that you have sponsored this bill.

I was getting worried that our local representatives weren't going to represent the will of their constituents. One can't deny that the majority of voices concerning Manh Choh trucking have been against it.

Thank you for addressing this issue.

Connie Zachel  
Fairbanks

## Riley von Borstel

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**From:** Beth Cender <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 11, 2024 5:11 PM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Subject:** SB 218 comments

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Senator Kawasaki,

To be clear, we are not supportive of any large heavy ore trucks using our highway/road infrastructure. They should be processing the ore where they mine it. If they are going to be allowed to truck the ore across the State, then we are very supportive of SB218. There needs to be accountability for any industry that puts excessive wear and tear on the States public infrastructure. This information has come to light through a private engineering firm that looked at the effects of moving heavy loads of mining ore over our highways. The cost of such permits to operate loads over 140,000 lbs should be structured so that they cover the cost to the infrastructure they are operating on that would not otherwise occur with lighter loads.

We would also like to see mining companies that want to develop and harvest the State's natural resources also help pay for state government. Besides the wear and tear on public highways there will also be an increased workload for police and troopers, EMTs, and State employees to not only issue permits and to enforce them, but also clear and maintain the roads they are using. And beyond the cost they bring to the State, they need to contribute to the overall benefit of the services the State renders for its population. If they are saving millions of dollars by moving ore in brand new trucks all the way from Tok to Fairbanks as they have stated, that suggests that they are also making millions of dollars, some of which should be contributed to the State. Let's not let companies, especially foreign companies, harvest our natural resources without compensation to the State.

Thank You,

Jeff Yarman  
Beth Cender  
[REDACTED]

**Riley von Borstel**

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**From:** Sharon Story <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 11, 2024 4:26 PM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Subject:** Senate Bill No. 218- Support

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Senator Kawasaki,

I support Senate Bill No. 218 to establish a vehicle weight limit on our Alaska roads. I will tune in to the hearing on March 14. Thank you for bringing this forward. As an Advocate for Safe highways, I appreciate all opportunities to continue to voice my opposition for the ore haul plan and ongoing concerns to the driving public and bus stop schoolchildren. Kinross ignores the rules and overrides opposing voices of many Alaskans. Please advocate for vehicle weight limits with fines established to support highway maintenance.

Thank you for your continued work.

Sharon Story  
[REDACTED]

## Riley von Borstel

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**From:** marykatherine romberg [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 12, 2024 2:13 PM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Subject:** Senate bill 28

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

I full support this bill that puts weight limits on trucks! This is important to keep dangerously heavy trucks off our roads and helps keep our roads from degrading. Thank you for introducing this bill. MK Romberg

Sent from my iPhone