

Bigger Trucks Threaten Rural Communities and Infrastructure

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Proponents of heavier and longer trucks would have you believe these trucks would only run on Interstates and other major highways, and would not operate on rural roads. In fact, these bigger trucks **would not be limited to the Interstates** for several reasons:

- The Double 33s proposal would mandate that states allow these longer double-trailer trucks to operate on 200,000 miles of roadways, referred to as the “National Network,” as well as any state or local roads intersecting with the National Network that are deemed necessary for “reasonable access” for loading, unloading, fuel and rest.
- Heavier trucks would similarly find their way onto state and local roads, since no truck loads or unloads freight on an Interstate, meaning these trucks would spill over into rural communities.
- Local roads account for 95 percent of the more than 4 million public roadways in the U.S.
- Large trucks travel over 37 billion miles a year on local roads—over 25 percent of all large-truck vehicle miles traveled.

And when these trucks run on local roads, their impact would be greater because these roads are more vulnerable to the impacts of the bigger trucks:

- Roads and bridges off the NHS are older and in worse shape than NHS routes—36 percent of bridges off of the NHS are over 50 years old while only 14 percent of Interstate bridges are that old.
- Nationwide, 66 percent of the bridges classified as “structurally deficient” are owned by the local cities and towns, not the federal government or states.
- Rural roads are the most dangerous—they are more likely than NHS routes to have roadway features that reduce safety, such as narrow lanes, limited shoulders, sharp curves and steep slopes. Rural roads have a traffic fatality rate that is nearly 300 percent higher than all other roads.¹

Rural roads and bridges cannot be an afterthought to the debate of allowing heavier and longer trucks on U.S. highways because of the costs to highway safety and infrastructure:

- The majority of automobile traffic, 56 percent, is on local roads.
- Rural roads and bridges are at the intersection of significant large-truck activity and where constituents live and work.
- Bigger trucks would impose an additional tax burden triggered by further damage to roads that will shift the responsibility to states and localities without any federal source for cost recovery.

¹ The Road Information Program, 2015. *Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland*.