Wayne County commissioners oppose efforts to increase truck weights on county roadways

Wayne County commissioners today unanimously supported a resolution opposing any legislation that would increase the weight and length of tractor-trailer trucks that travel on county roads.

Presented by Wayne County Commission Chair Alisha Bell, D-Detroit, the resolution states that any increases beyond the current capacity of county infrastructure would cause excessive damage to roads and bridges and increase safety risks for motorists.

“We know here in Michigan what this does to our roads, and what it has done to our roads,” Chair Bell said. “Safety for all drivers and our infrastructure should not be compromised and this body will not approve any legislation that calls for an increase in weight or length of trucks.”

Other counties throughout the U.S. have adopted similar legislation, Chair Bell noted. Federal Highway Administration data states there are 78 structurally deficient bridges within Wayne County. In addition, only 16 percent of the roads in Wayne County are considered to be in “good condition” according to recent data from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).
The resolution urges action by the Michigan Legislature and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to propose and enact legislation that would enforce strict weight limits to protect the integrity of the state’s infrastructure.

A copy of the resolution follows:

RESOLUTION
By Commissioner Bell

WHEREAS, proposals continue to be drawn in Congress to allow for the increase in weights and lengths of tractor trailer trucks on Michigan roadways; and

WHEREAS, the Wayne County Commission is concerned for the welfare and safety of residents and families in the county who travel roads where the increased weight of these vehicles will cause greater acceleration of the deterioration of highways, roads and bridges, placing further pressure on taxpayers to repair or replace the infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, according to recent Federal Highway Administration data, there are 78 structurally deficient bridges within Wayne County. Additionally, only 16 percent of the roads in Wayne County are considered to be in “good condition” according to recent data compiled by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments; and

WHEREAS, Michigan, which has the highest maximum allowable weight for trucks operating within the United States, faces infrastructure and safety challenges resulting from extreme truck traffic and diminished funding for roads and bridges, which would be exacerbated by increasing the weight for trucks; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Transportation has concluded that heavier trucks, trucks weighing at or above 80,000 pounds, have higher overall out-of-service violation rates and 18 percent higher brake violation rates; and

WHEREAS, the present fine calculation formula shows the penalty for overweight violations is often minimal compared to the economic benefit of transporting freight that would otherwise be permitted, with the fine for hauling 10,000 pounds over the limit being $3,000 and determining that the overweight citation as an acceptable cost of doing business; and
WHEREAS, in its Final Report to Congress as part of the MAP-21 Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study in 2016, the recommendation from the United States Department of Transportation was against any increases in the current truck size and weight limits; and

WHEREAS, organizations such as the National Association of Counties, the National Sheriffs’ Association, the National Association of County Engineers and others have formally opposed proposals that would increase the weights or lengths of tractor-trailer trucks;

Now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on this 25th day of July 2019, that the Wayne County Commission strongly opposes any legislation seeking to increase the weights and lengths of tractor-trailer trucks on county roads, resulting in excessive damage to roads and bridges while increasing risks to motorists; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Wayne County Commission urges action to be taken by the Michigan Legislature and/or Governor Gretchen Whitmer to enact legislation and enforce strict weight limit infractions to protect the integrity of the state’s infrastructure; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be provided to U.S. Senators Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow, as well as to members of the U.S. House of Representatives whose districts fall within Wayne County, and the Office of the Governor of the State of Michigan.