



**Kansas Grain & Feed Association (KGFA)**  
**Kansas Cooperative Council (KCC)**  
816 SW Tyler, Topeka, Kansas 66612

March 14, 2017

**TO:** Senate Committee on Transportation; Senator Mike Petersen, Chairman  
**From:** Randy Stookey, Vice President & General Counsel, Kansas Grain and Feed Association  
Leslie Kaufman, President/CEO, Kansas Cooperative Council

**RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2095 as amended, providing a special vehicle permit for certain vehicle combinations – 90,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight on six6 axles**

Chairman Petersen and members of the Senate Committee on Transportation. Thank you for the opportunity to comment today in support of HB 2095 as amended. This testimony is being submitted jointly on behalf of the Kansas Cooperative Council (KCC) and the Kansas Grain and Feed Association (KGFA).

The KCC's membership includes grain storage elevators, farm marketing and agricultural supply cooperatives, rural electric and telecommunications companies, insurance and risk management operations, credit unions, and Farm Credit system members. KGFA is a voluntary state association with a membership encompassing the entire spectrum of the grain receiving, storage, processing and shipping industry in Kansas. KGFA's membership includes over 950 Kansas business locations and represents 98% of the commercially licensed grain storage in the state.

Our associations are working with a coalition of interests in support of this proposal. Attached to our statement today, you will find our group's talking points handout and I would draw your attention the entities that have joined in support of modestly increasing gross vehicle weight on an additional axle.

As currently written, , HB 2095 as amended will provide the opportunity for motor carriers to obtain an annual special permit allowing them to transport up to 90,000 lbs. on six-axle truck configurations, consistent with the US Dept. of Transportation (DOT) Federal Highway Administration's Federal Bridge Formula, on non-interstate roads. Federal standards for commercial vehicles on the interstate system allow 80,000 pounds total gross vehicle weight (GVW). Off of the interstate system, states may set their own commercial vehicle weight standards.

The majority of states in our region utilize increased gross vehicle weights at the state level.<sup>1</sup> In Iowa, in 2010, maximum truck weights were increased to 90,000 pounds on six axles, and to 96,000 pounds on seven axles. Similarly, in Nebraska, motor carriers may transport 90,000 pounds on six axles and

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<sup>1</sup> *Heavier Semis: A Good Idea? An Update of the 2009 Study*, United States Soybean Export Council Report, Prepared by: Informa Economics, Jan. 2015.

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95,000 pounds on seven axles. Oklahoma law was recently amended to allow motor carriers to transport 90,000 lbs. on six-axle configurations. Minnesota law authorizes a seasonal maximum cap of 98,000 pounds. North Dakota's maximum gross weight on seven axles is 105,000 pounds and South Dakota allows up to 129,000 pounds on seven axles. Colorado allows up to 97,000 pounds on 6 axles by special permit.

Our member grain elevators store millions of bushels of wheat, corn, milo, soybeans and other agricultural commodities across the state. After purchasing grain from local farmers, it is stored and then marketed to buyers both locally and around the world. The length of storage will depend on markets and grain handlers may wait many weeks, sometimes months to sell the grain. Our members also buy grain from other areas to fill supply needs for local livestock feeders, mills or ethanol plants. So, for our members, the grain handling "season" is all year long. In order to move this grain in the marketplace, it must be transported to either a local buyer or shipped in/out across the state or country.

A significant portion of our membership must rely on truck transport for moving grain, often even when they are ultimately trying to access rail. In recent years, we have seen a shortage of commercial truck drivers in the U.S. This shortage is expected to increase to 175,000 drivers by the year 2024.<sup>2</sup> To illustrate this, as of last week, one of our KGFA members had more than 50 open positions for truck drivers. With the decreasing number of drivers and many open driver positions, it is difficult for us to see how this legislation will be an across-the-board job eliminator. Additionally, many Kansas grain elevators are not located on a serviced rail line.<sup>3</sup> These facilities have no choice but to truck their grain in commerce, again, including trucking to rail access locations.

As Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Colorado, and other states have allowed for increased gross vehicle weights, Kansas grain elevators find it increasingly difficult to compete for the limited amount of commercial truck drivers. For a commercial carrier to haul a load of grain from a Kansas elevator today, rather than in Nebraska, the driver would lose the revenue off the difference in the authorized load capacities. This situation creates an economic disadvantage for grain elevators and farmers when marketing and transporting their grain. It is often difficult for Kansas grain shippers to find enough commercial carriers to transport Kansas grain. Passage of HB 2095 would allow our state to economically compete with our neighboring states.

While the national interstate system handles 55 percent of the total truck traffic, the transportation of agriculture commodities is more dependent on state roads.<sup>4</sup> HB 2095 will provide for more efficient transportation of agricultural commodities by allowing for a reasonable and limited increase in the maximum gross vehicle weight standard when utilizing a six-axle truck configuration.

Our members' struggle with bringing grain to market under these logistical hurdles is real. The challenges exist regardless of record harvests, but the increased crop yields in recent years create additional impetus for securing a GVW increase as soon as possible. This combination of record yields, along with logistical constraints has led to longer storage times and more grain being stored in

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<sup>2</sup> *Truck Driver Shortage Analysis 2015*, Bob Costello & Rod Suarez, American Trucking Associations, October 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Track removed along the Nebraska, Kansas & Colorado short line, and rail along Boot Hill & Western was railbanked from the UP interchange at Bucklin to the BNSF interchange in Dodge City.

<sup>4</sup> *Heavier Semis: A Good Idea? An Update of the 2009 Study*, United States Soybean Export Council Report, Prepared by: Informa Economics, Jan. 2015.

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temporary storage structures. Use of such alternative storage may result in grain degradation, lower prices for farmers, decreased revenue for elevators, and an overall negative impact on Kansas rural economies. For this reason, the goal and intent of HB 2095 is relevant to our members.

It is true that simply increasing total truck weight, without adding an additional axle to spread that weight, can cause more wear and tear on road and bridge surfaces than a lighter vehicle on the same number of axles. However, the amount of wear and tear of any vehicle on a road surface is a function of the vehicle weight, the number of contact points with the road surface, and total traffic volume.<sup>5</sup>

Increasing the number of truck axles allows the gross vehicle weight of a truck to be distributed to the road surface more evenly over more contact points, which spreads out the stress of the truck on the road surface and mitigates the impact of the load. Therefore, adding an additional sixth axle compensates for a truck's impact on road surfaces even when allowing increased truck weights.<sup>6</sup>

The six-axle, 90,000 lbs. truck configuration proposed in HB 2095 would reduce axle weights from 17,100 lbs. per axel (currently authorized on 85,500 pound 5-axle trucks), to 15,000 lbs. (90,000 pound, 6-axle trucks). In 2015, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) analyzed the impact of allowing 92,000 pound trucks on Kansas roadways. According to the analysis, impacts on road surfaces are mitigated with the addition of a sixth axle, even when up to 92,000 pounds.<sup>7</sup>

There is currently a federal requirement for every bridge in the nation to be analyzed for maximum weight. Federal funding exists through an 80% federal match to help offset most of the costs of this weight analysis requirement. Additionally, because the six-axle configuration has been shown to reduce wear and tear on road and bridge surfaces, this bill could save local units of government money for road maintenance.<sup>8</sup> One study from the Minnesota DOT even suggests that Minnesota could save \$4.43 million annually by allowing 90,000 pound, six-axle configurations.<sup>9</sup>

In 2010, when the law was changed in Iowa to allow trucks hauling grain to carry up to 90,000 pounds on six axles, and up to 96,000 pounds on seven axles, both the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) and the Iowa County Engineers Association (ICEA) supported the legislation. The Iowa State Association of Counties, relayed that the primary reason the ISAC and the ICEA supported the legislation in Iowa was that “the increase was done in a responsible way,” and that “there is less wear and tear on the secondary roads if the load weight can be spread out among more axles, so a moderate increase in the total weight spread over an additional axle is actually better for the road system.”<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, allowing six-axle, 90,000 pound trucks could potentially reduce the number of trucks on Kansas roads, thus decreasing the number of truck miles driven and reducing the amount of road wear

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<sup>5</sup> *Heavier Semis*, at XVii.

<sup>6</sup> *Heavier Semis*, at

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Transportation Research Synthesis, Benefits and Costs of Increasing Truck Load Limits: A Literature Review*. Local Research Board, Minn. Dept. of Transportation, Research Services & Library. Prepared by CTC & Associates. January 2015.

<sup>9</sup> *Transportation Research Synthesis*, at Table 5, page 6.

<sup>10</sup> Email correspondence on Thursday, January 5, 2017, between Randy Stookey, KGFA, and Lucas Beenken, Public Policy Specialist, Iowa State Association of Counties.

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currently caused by trucks.<sup>11</sup> Both the reduction in axle weight and the potential for a reduction in truck volume could decrease the amount of wear on Kansas roads by allowing six-axle, 90,000 pound trucks.

Frequently in Kansas, commercial trucking and rail are not interchangeable modes of transportation for agriculture. Consider grain elevators hauling grain to a nearby feed yard, flour mill, feed mill, ethanol plant, or even to the nearest train loading facility. These grain elevators, out of necessity, will utilize truck transport rather than rail service, especially as the first phase of accessing the market.

Amending Kansas law to allow for six-axle weight configurations could also result in less traffic congestion as more of our state's agricultural commodities are transported using fewer trucks. A reduction in truck density would improve motorist safety, which research shows has a direct correlation with truck traffic congestion over a given stretch of road.<sup>12</sup> Further, a six-axle, 90,000 pound truck is a safer vehicle than a standard five-axle 80,000 pound truck, as it has *greater* surplus braking capacity and requires a shorter stopping distance.<sup>13</sup>

Kansas grain handlers and farmers would experience efficiencies and cost savings through adoption of a six-axle, 90,000 pound truck configuration. When utilizing an 80,000 pound, 5-axle truck, a Kansas farmer that produced a total of 135,000 bushels of grain would require approximately 144 trips on Kansas roads to transport the grain to storage or market (92 for corn, plus 26 for soybeans, plus 26 for wheat). If the farmer's delivery location is 25 miles from the farm (50 miles roundtrip), the farmer would cover 7,200 miles to transport the grain. However, if that farmer were able to utilize a six-axle, 90,000 pound truck, this same farmer would save 18 trips to storage, driving *900 fewer miles* on Kansas roads.<sup>14</sup>

HB 2095 works to harmonize Kansas truck weight standards on six-axle commercial vehicles with other states in our region, and provides a reasonable, necessary and limited remedy to the current economic disadvantage of grain shippers in our state. In addition, the proposal introduces a safer truck configuration that could mitigate wear and tear on Kansas roads. Harmonization with other states might also provide additional, cross-border hauling opportunities for Kansas carriers. As such, we respectfully request that the committee pass this bill favorably. A technical amendment requested by the Kansas Dept. of Transportation was included in the House committee amendments and we have no objection to it. Beyond that, we do not believe any other amendments are needed and we prefer the bill remain as currently presented. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2095 as amended.

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<sup>11</sup> *USDOT Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Presentation of Technical Results*, U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, June 18, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> *Heavier Semis*, at XV.

<sup>13</sup> *Transportation Research Synthesis, Benefits and Costs of Increasing Truck Load Limits: A Literature Review*. Local Research Board, Minn. Dept. of Transportation, Research Services & Library. Prepared by CTC & Associates. January 2015, at 6.

<sup>14</sup> Numbers courtesy of *Soy Transportation Coalition*.



# Please vote YES on HB 2095:

## a Limited, Reasonable and Safe Permit to Harmonize Kansas Truck Weights with Surrounding States



Tyson Foods, Inc.



national carriers  
the 'Elite' fleet®



We ask your **support** for HB 2095 which passed the House of Representatives with a vote of 77-48. HB 2095 allows six-axle trucks (semi with a triple-axle trailer) to carry up to 90,000 lbs. on non-interstate roads, an increase from the current maximum gross vehicle weight of 85,500 lbs. This is a modest, reasonable, necessary, and safe bill that harmonizes Kansas weight standards with our surrounding states. It is important to note that this does not restrict trucks that are already on Kansas roads. We urge you to consider the following impacts of the bill:

**INCREASED EFFICIENCY:** This MODEST increase can save farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses TIME and MONEY, which is necessary in today's tough times. For many haulers, this could save a truckload every 20th trip.

**PROTECTING KANSAS ROADS:** Studies confirm trucks with a triple-axle trailer carrying 90,000 lbs. would mitigate wear and tear on roads.<sup>1</sup> A truck hauling the current maximum Kansas weight (85,500 lbs.) will have 20,000 lbs. on the trailer's load bearing spread-axles. This bill would reduce the weight per axle to roughly 14,600 lbs. using a third axle.

**SAFETY:** A triple-axle trailer increases a truck's surplus braking capacity, even at a greater total weight. The additional axle also reduces weight per axle and distributes the load weight more evenly compared to a five-axle truck at 85,500 lbs. These factors work to create a safer truck configuration.

**KANSAS IS AT A COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE:** Many states have recognized the need for additional transport capacity, and have made reasonable changes to their laws. The bill would harmonize Kansas weight standards with our neighboring agricultural states:

- Iowa: 90,000 lbs. on six axles, and 96,000 lbs. on seven axles (amended in 2010)
- Nebraska: 90,000 lbs. on six axles and 95,000 lbs. on seven axles
- Oklahoma: 90,000 lbs. on six axles
- North Dakota: 105,000 lbs. on seven axles
- South Dakota: 129,000 lbs. on seven axles
- Minnesota: seasonally up to 98,000 lbs.
- Missouri: 88,000 lbs. on five axles on grain harvest trucks and higher weights via special permit
- Colorado: 85,000 lbs. on five axles, special permit up to 97,000 lbs. on six axles

**RAIL SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE:** Approximately 72% of Kansas co-op grain facilities do not have access to active rail service. Livestock has not been shipped by rail since the mid-1900s. Nearly all products shipped by rail in Kansas must first be trucked to serviced rail sites.

**JOBS:** The bill does NOT take jobs. The Midwest is experiencing a shortage of commercial truck drivers. An American Trucking Association study estimates there will be a national shortage of 175,000 drivers by 2025. HB 2095 would allow Kansas to better compete for this limited supply of commercial drivers.

Sincerely,

ADM Grain, Tyson Foods, Inc., Cargill Inc., U.S. Premium Beef, National Beef, National Carriers, Beachner Grain Inc., Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, Kansas Corn Growers Association, Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association, Kansas Soybean Association, Soy Transportation Coalition, Renew Kansas, Kansas Pork Association, Team Marketing Alliance, Kansas Cooperative Council, Kansas Grain and Feed Association, Kansas Ag. Retailers Association, Kansas Livestock Association, Kansas Motor Carriers Association.

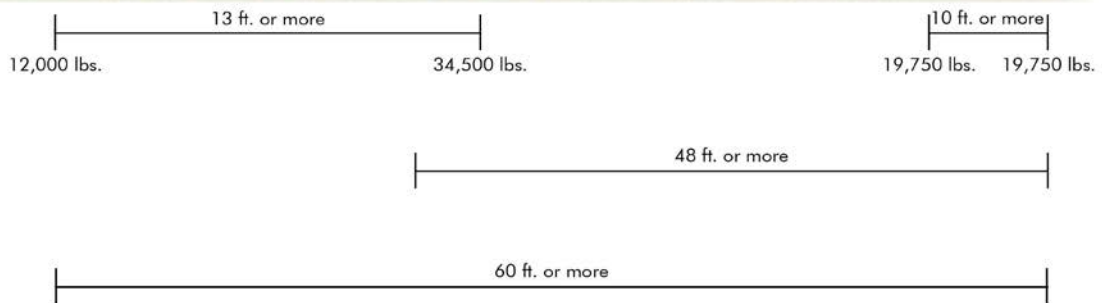
<sup>1</sup> Kansas DOT, Soy Transportation Coalition, USDOT, Federal Highway Admin., the Transportation Research Board Wisconsin Truck Size Study, Minnesota DOT, Maine Turnpike, New Hampshire Turnpike, Texas DOT



See back for pictures

## Allowed by current law

# Spread Axle Tractor Trailer Combination 85,500 lbs.



## Proposed under HB 2095

# Triple Axle Tractor Trailer Combination 90,000 lbs.

