



Automobile Transporters Request Weight Tolerance to Grow Their Active Role in Environmental Stewardship



ACC POSITION: Given that electric and hybrid automobiles are substantially heavier than their gasoline-powered counterparts, Congress should consider adjusting federal regulations to allow a 10% weight tolerance for stinger steered automobile transporters. Such flexibility would allow auto haulers to reduce trucking's environmental impact and regain lost load capacity, without compromising safety.

BACKGROUND: Electric vehicles (EVs) are widely-recognized as the most promising technology to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, and we anticipate a greater proliferation of EVs on America's roadways in the coming years. Importantly, as automobiles transition from gasoline to more sustainable power sources, they also become heavier. For example, the batteries and powertrains in hybrid vehicles make them significantly heavier than their gasoline-powered counterparts. These weight increases in automobiles have a direct impact on the operations of automobile transporters, who must adhere to strict weight restrictions. This impact began in 2007 with mandates to increase emission standards, adding additional equipment resulting in lost load capacity.

According to federal regulations, automobile transporter combinations may not exceed 80,000 pounds or 80 feet long. As automobiles employing advanced technologies become more fuel efficient, they are also becoming significantly heavier. Automobile transporters are increasingly hamstrung by weight requirements that were specifically designed to govern the transportation of traditional internal combustion engine ("ICE") vehicles—not next-generation, greener vehicles. Just as passenger vehicle regulations have evolved to accommodate the added weight of greener technologies, it is imperative that the rules governing the transportation of these vehicles evolve as well. For example, while a 2021 Toyota RAV4 weighs 3,405 pounds, its Plug-in Hybrid counterpart is 350 pounds heavier at 3,755 pounds. The equivalent EV model of the RAV4 is 4,300 pounds, which is 895 pounds heavier than the ICE RAV4. Similarly, the all new electric Ford Mustang weighs up to 1,065 pounds over the heaviest 2021 ICE Mustang. Unlike other shipments, automobiles are non-divisible. Ultimately, EVs and other hybrid vehicles add significant, unrecoverable weight to the loaded truck. A 10% weight variance will enable automobile transporters to regain the former load factor and allow for greater efficiency by reducing the overall number of hauls required to transport vehicles around the nation.

IMPACT: Trucking companies would be able to reduce their environmental impact through the operational efficiencies that a 10% weight tolerance would achieve. Estimates show that a 10% weight variance would result in the reduction of approximately 16 million miles traveled, eliminating the consumption of 3.1 million gallons of diesel fuel, annually. According to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, this equates to the elimination of approximately 32 metric tons of emissions that otherwise would be released into the atmosphere. This can be accomplished without compromising safety. Independent test results demonstrate that fully-loaded automobile transporter combinations are still able to stop well within prescribed federal standards. Moreover, thirty-three states currently allow trucks weighing over 80,000 pounds by means of scale tolerances, permits, etc. to drive on the national highway system.

SOLUTION: ATA urges Congress to authorize a 10% percent weight tolerance for stinger steered automobile transporters, as defined in 23 CFR 658.13(e)(1), to account for the increasing weights of passenger vehicles, reduce congestion, and lessen the automobile transportation industry's environmental impact.

For more information, please contact: ACC or ATA Legislative Affairs at 202-544-6245.