

Comments submitted for Payette public hearing:

Written Comments:

The Fruitland City Council supports efforts to approve the application from Arlo G. Lott Trucking for 129,000-pound trucks to operate on US-95. We understand the south half of Fruitland is already permitted to Marsing. The safety measures undertaken to assure safer, modern equipment is installed on the trucks and their regular inspection provides an additional level of confidence in this request.

Approval would greatly enhance the ability to transport goods at a more competitive cost, creating more favorable economic development opportunities for our community and the rest of Idaho.

Hwy 95 between Payette and Weiser is already congested, especially during peak hours.

I support approval of the route, but with the caveat that ITD start planning for passing lanes on the road between Payette and Fruitland.

The current condition of the section of highway between Payette and Weiser will not withstand the proposed 129,000 pounds as proposed. The current condition with stress cracks, potholes and other fractures which have been caused by overloaded vehicles are causing the roadway to deteriorate.

Also, groves made by heavy loads have created a hazard, which creates a hydroplaning effect on lighter vehicles traveling the road. When the winter season passes, and frost heaves settle, the roadway is going to need some major repairs.

I don't have a problem with the weights, but the added length will make it that much harder to pass. Highway 95 is the North-South highway in Idaho. It desperately needs some passing lanes. I think that would make the highway safer for everyone.

I am concerned about the 129,000 lb. trucks operating on Highway 95 from a safety standpoint. As the Fire Chief, we respond to numerous vehicle accidents on the Highway 95 corridor. The section from Payette to Weiser should be made a safety corridor with a 55 speed limit and passing lanes eventually.

It would be huge if we could get a traffic light at Weiser, specifically Main Street and Highway 95. Maybe only allow the trucks to operate Monday through Friday, not on weekends when Highway 95 is busy with campers, etc.

I feel that the trucking companies should contribute to the cost of Highway 95 improvements. ITD does not have the funding to keep up with maintenance right now.

I would just caution ITD on allowing this to move forward. If this is such a good program, why doesn't Oregon or the Federal Highway System allow these mega-loads?

I would like to encourage ITD to look at mitigation measures to address safety if this permit is allowed. I do not believe that any trucks will be eliminated from the highway, only heavier trucks used.

However, my greatest concern is stopping distance with increased weight going through the communities and rural areas along Hwy 95. Hwy 95 intersects with Park St. in Weiser, which runs in front of Park School. Children regularly cross Hwy 95 from Park to Main St. before and after school. I would suggest the requested light be placed at Hwy 95 and Main St. to help slow down traffic in the area.

Further mitigation could be changing the speed limit between Weiser and Payette to 55 mph and provide turnout lanes and no passing zones to encourage safer travel on the roadway.

Additional signage along the route is needed to remind all drivers of possible slow moving traffic, particularly during harvest.

Crossing Hwy 95 is difficult within the city. Increased traffic, both car and truck, has increased our concern about crossing 95 safely. Heavier trucks requiring additional space to stop could be challenged as car and pedestrians try to cross. Please consider putting the light in and reducing the speed limit on Hwy 95 going south to Payette as well as providing additional no passing zones.

To whom it may concern: The County Commissioners from Washington County have discussed this issue and we feel it would be okay to allow these 129,000 lb trucks on the highway being considered.

I was at the meeting in Payette and was given the information concerning this change. It was well presented and I thank you for taking the time to listen and to teach.

I attended the public hearing in Payette on December 17th and have several concerns regarding the proposal to allow 129,000 pound trucks on US 95 between Fruitland and Grangeville.

My primary concern is for the safety of the children of the Weiser School District who travel on and across US 95 to get to school and return home. US 95 is a main corridor for the district's bus routes and commuter traffic before and after school. Increasing the size and length of trucks passing through our community increases the risk to our residents with potentially longer stopping times and distances along with the increase in the density of their loads.

Additionally, US 95 between Payette and Weiser has been the scene for at least seven fatalities of students and graduates of the Weiser School District since 1998. These have occurred along the fairly straight but narrow stretch of US 95 south of Weiser. Any change to the size and length of trucks using the highway without a significant change in the safety requirements and significant road improvements will only increase the risk for our residents and other travelers.

I understand that there have been significant studies and efforts to pilot increased truck loads in Idaho dating back to 2002. However, US 95 has never been included in those pilots and I believe for good reason. The road is narrow, windy, with few turnouts and passing lanes. As a driver who travels Hwy 95 frequently, I am concerned about the safety of longer and heavier loads along the narrow and steep grades along US 95 between Council and New Meadows, the narrow curve just north of Riggins, the right turn required in the heart of Council, and lack of road width and adequate turnouts over the length of the proposed route. I have witnessed the frustration of motorists and truckers over stretches of US 95 leading to some poor decision making and increased risk taking while travelling the narrow and windy stretches of highway.

I support efforts to increase business trade from northern to southern Idaho and back again, but I reject the argument that by allowing larger and longer trucks there will be less overall truck travel. I would anticipate other companies increasing their use of the highway if the increased size is allowed. I would encourage ITD to undertake and complete significant road improvements along this stretch of highway before authorizing an increase in the size and length of trucks allowed to transport goods over the route. I understand the calculated savings for trucking companies and producers, but I cannot support the project at the expense of safe travel for everyone along this mountainous and narrow highway.

Verbal Comments

As far as the 129, we're positive for all of it. Give you a little history. We've been running 95 since 1971, hauling lumber products out of the northern Idaho mills, bringing them into the Treasure Valley and into Utah, Idaho - or Utah and Nevada and the surrounding states.

We've been a strong supporter of the 129. Currently, we probably do about 1,300 loads from northern Idaho down Highway 95 a year. This will reduce us to about 920, is about what we figured out. I have my notes and I can tell you how much fuel and tire wear and all that but it's a great reduction.

The thing that we look at too is that the 129 combination trucks we feel are a little bit safer. You got 10 axles of brakes versus 7 and when you do the math, you'll find out that the braking on it's just a little bit safer and a little bit better and it reduces us quite a few trips coming out of north Idaho.

The off-track, I think that's all been supported. We're at a 5.33 off-track which is shorter or - yeah, it's a smaller off-track than our 53 footers which are 5.49 currently. So it even makes a little bit better off-track than what those do plus the footprint of it is a little lighter, a little softer.

My concern has been in the beginning was to make sure that ABS brakes are mandatory on all trucks doing the 129, that they have the safety features that that requires and that's been written in. I've read that so pretty well everything to make this go forward has been addressed and we feel positive about it.

We are running to the sawmills in Grangeville, Kamiah, Kooskia, Orofino, Lewiston, Princeton, Chilco, Moyie Springs. We do pretty well all the northern sawmills. This is just the first part of what we see that can happen as far as Grangeville and Lewiston are the only two mills that we'll be able to pull out to begin with and then we'll go for Kooskia,

Kamiah and we know that we can't go to Princeton yet. I think 2016, some road improvements will be addressed just coming out of Moscow. They've got a little hill there that gets a little too much ice in the winter that's kind of a safety hazard.

The combination that we've put together, it's even better than what we're running currently so - you know, we're pulling four-axle pull trailers which is safer than the two axles that we've been doing for 40 years, 30 years, whatever it's been.

The heavier trucks does make a lot of sense when you think about it but they're actually a little safer. We put our better drivers in it.

Comments submitted for Riggins public hearing:

Written Comments:

I would like to express Benewah County's concerns and oppose the application for a new 129,000 pound truck route on US 95 from Fruitland to Lewiston.

A large number of Idaho roads are in poor to mediocre condition and do not possess the proper widths, passing lanes, turnouts and safety ramps necessary for trucks carrying 129,000 pound loads. Adding to that, inclement weather and winding roadways create unsafe conditions for everyone.

Longer, heavier trucks will lead to more congestion on our highways and put increased stress on our roads and bridges and it is unfair to hold taxpayers responsible for paying for infrastructure damage caused by the heavier trucks.

Trucks will be slower pulling grades on 2-lane sections w/o passing lanes. This will cause traffic to back up; more drivers will take more risks.

Portions of US 95 are more hazardous than others: The grade N. of Council, Little Rainbow to Smoky Boulder, the 4-5 mile stretch So. of Riggins, "Target" curve segment just N. of Riggins. How will this change affect safety in these areas?

Will brake capability be improved to cope w/129,000 lb loads?

What/where are the weakest structural segments on this route?
Example: a 4-6 mile segment N. of New Meadows has a history of frost heaving.

What long-span structures could be impacted?

What is the fee structure compared to present load restriction fees?

Other Safety Concerns: Please consider a mandatory reg to operate only w/headlights, regardless of day/night (per Alaska specs).

At M.P. 209.8, there exists a parking area not separated from the sweeping curve of U.S. 95. This permits vehicles w/boat trailers any (indiscriminately) open access. Please find a way to control this traffic.

Peak highway traffic occurs during Spring Break/Xmas/Thanksgiving, etc. This tremendous load can be anticipated. I'm suggesting that some commercial traffic be curtailed at these times.

I am against allowing 129,000 pound loads on US 95, local Lewiston, and local Grangeville routes for the following reasons: 1) Local routes, where most traffic and intersections are, are not designed nor built for loads of this size.

- 2) Although the safe truck following distance would be at least seven seconds, it is difficult to maintain. Stopping distance would be extra long, but there is not any extra visibility at intersections.
 - 3) Several sections of the road are narrow, curvy, and have no shoulders, specifically north of New Meadows and then south of Riggins.
 - 4) Whitebird Grade is a challenge to improperly maintained vehicles going north or south in the summer and winter.
 - 5) Improperly adjusted brakes are the number one equipment problem, and
 - 6) The loads can be economically hauled in smaller loads.
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Verbal Comments:

It's one of those after the fact things. It's going to be tough to come back with.

The big thing that I felt about is, is that the roads really haven't changed in 40 years. The trucking deal has gone from 80 thousand back in the 60s, to 85, as I recollect.

I've lived here in Riggins 44 years. I've seen too many trucks wrecking here. I know it's not all that bad across the country. We have great road coming from northern Idaho.

I don't think a lot of those truckers are aware of that. Hence the name, the Bull's Eye. I just got missed one time there at the Bull's Eye.

It's just between Riggins and the Race Creek Bridge. There's a place in there. A lot of people come around that corner and smash into the bluff. That's why they call it the Bull's Eye.

When I went past the Bull's Eye, I thought this truck was coming pretty fast. It rolled over. That has an impact on everybody. We have

so much weight and so much speed. I know the guys talked about the brakes. I just don't know if we're ready for trucks that long and that have that much weight.

On the other hand, I know the bottom line. The bottom line is the trucking industry's profit margin. That's what the game is. I was thinking maybe there ought to be someone who says, "maybe we don't need that much."

My thoughts are: I'm worried about the length because the roads are crooked. I'm worried about the weight. They say the longer trailers have axles more spread out, and will put less weight on the roads per square inch.

I'm totally against these bigger, longer, bigger heavier trucks on our highways. When you went up to 105,000, we started noticing immediately the effect it was having on our roads and they keep saying, "oh, it's the traffic. It's the little cars, it's the studded tires and it's this and that" but I don't know why then that the damage to the road is exactly the size of a set of dualies.

There's two tracks. Not one. All right? And it's dangerous as can be on these roads through here. If you ever come up behind a truck if there's any snow or rain on the road at all and try to get by them, it's hard enough when they've got a single trailer and they're 60 or 90, whatever - however long they are. It's really tough to get around them safely. Almost impossible if it's raining or snowing.

So if they get heavier, longer, bigger, it's just going to be dangerous to everybody that drives up and down this road. It was wrong for them to do it from Grangeville to Lewiston, which I understand it's been done up there. It was wrong to do that because we drive to Lewiston, shopping and stuff. It's just dangerous to my family, my children, my grandchildren and everybody on the road, I believe.

It's all to make a few dollars for somebody - a few people. Very few people at the expense of the safety of all the other people that are on the road. And there's a lot of truck drivers, I'll guarantee you. I watch a lot of truck drivers. I follow them. I drive around them and I've been a truck driver and I've been a logger and a rancher and everything else and a lot of these truck drivers, they're not - you know, it used to be that truck drivers were the safest drivers on the road in the old days. They had logged many a mile and they were safe.

But half of these people now, they can't read our signs. They don't know where they're at, you know. They're not safe. I watch some of these guys with these pups - they're pulling pups behind logging trucks now. They come down the road. They're just whipping like that. It scares the hell out of you, you know.

And then you get on the freeway. You got triples down there. You ever watch a set of triples when you're behind them?

They don't wreck but they're all over the damn place. It scares you to death. Anyway, that's what I think about this. I'm totally against it. Totally. And if they do it, I'm going to be upset.

I guess I'd say I supported this in the Legislature and specifically because if there's a chance for efficiency, I try to be for that. And the law stated that it would be approved if it was safe - if it could be checked out to be safe and if the infrastructure was built to handle the extra weight and length. And so all I can say is that if we go by what the legislation - the legislation, I'm all for it. I guess that's about all I can say about it.

I have confidence that you guys will put all those factors into it because I know you do that and I appreciate how you do that so I'm not worried.

My concern with the configurations is with the highways. If we're going to go this direction, on all the hills or any steep grades, we need to have a minimum of three lanes. We need to have a passing lane going up the hills to keep the other traffic from trying to pass us in areas that they shouldn't be passing and - because the steeper the grade, the more impatient the other vehicles on the roadway gets and that allows everyone more room in those difficult situations then.

If the driver were to lose control, he's got more room to maneuver. That's our biggest problem with our highways right now is there's certain areas - canyons going up before Smoky Boulder and between Tamarack and Council are two bad areas that they need to fix the road and we need passing lanes. Winchester Grade should be a passing lane all the way up Winchester Grade.

Other concern is safety. If carriers like Arlo Lott, and I know they will, put the money into buying new equipment, they'll have trailers that have ABS brakes which will help with the control in slick conditions. So one idea would be mandatory - if you're going to pull 129,000 pounds, you have to have trailers with ABS brakes which would eliminate some of these parties, fly-by-night companies that would have shoddy equipment and make it more dangerous to all the rest of us.

The other issue is the exemption on grain haulers and agricultural exemption and not requiring a Class A CDL. If you're going to pull this configuration, you should be required to have a Class A CDL irregardless of what types of commodity you're pulling.