

Overview

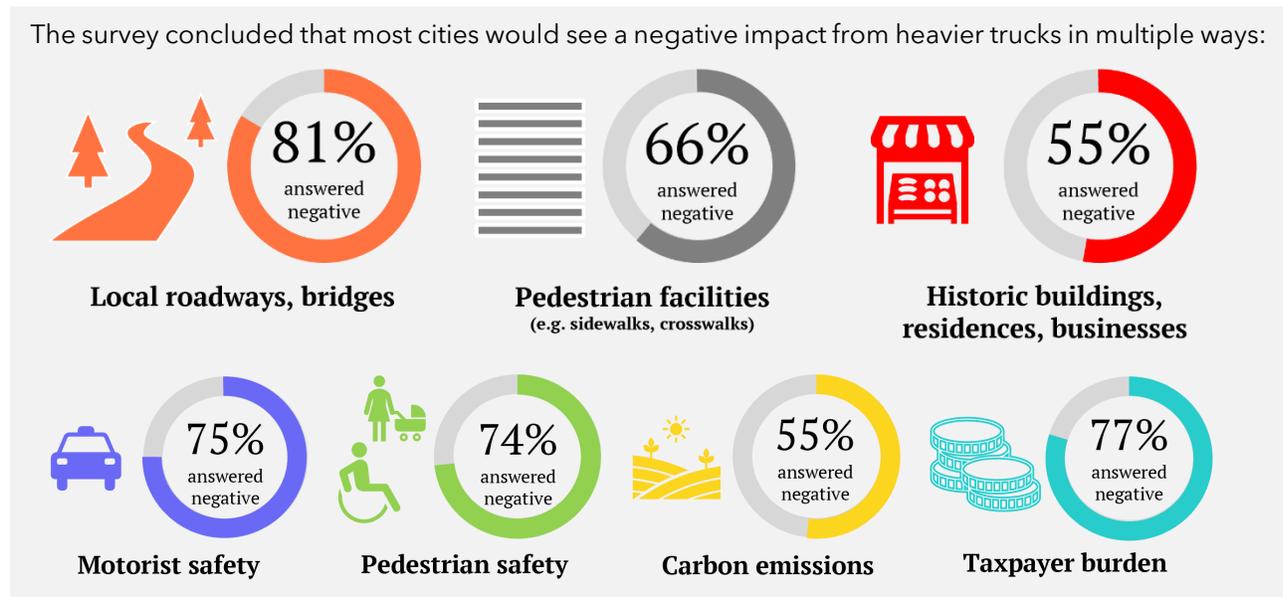
- GMA opposes legislation that will allow increased truck weights on municipal roads.
- Industry representatives initially sought a truck weight variance that will allow trucks up to 90,000 lb. but have since adjusted down to 88,000 lb. – this remains a grave concern of local governments tasked with ensuring their communities’ safety and prosperity.
- Federal laws prohibit these heavy trucks on interstates, so they will be forced to travel on state and local roads that are not designed to withstand these weights.
- Heavier trucks would reduce the lifespan of roads and require cities to resurface them more often.

Research Findings

In January 2023, GMA surveyed municipal leaders in all 537 member cities on the infrastructural, public safety and economic impacts of heavier trucks in their communities. Based on input from 177 cities (33%) across different community types (rural, urban and suburban),

80% of cities oppose any legislation to increase truck weights.

The survey concluded that most cities would see a negative impact from heavier trucks in multiple ways:



The collective input from municipal leaders points to an already problematic status quo:

Deteriorating roadway conditions – "... routinely damage pavement, curbing, sidewalks, storm drainage facilities, traffic control devices and utilities, [requiring] significant unbudgeted local government expenditures for repairs and/or replacement." (Decatur)

Life-threatening accidents and a squeeze on public safety resources – "We frequently have overturned trucks and truck collisions with vehicles within our municipal limits. Most occur on I-75 which passes through our city, but we must respond." (Byron)

Disruptions to quality of life – "[A truck driver] hit the fire hydrant and we lost all water. [They] drove off, [and] cost the city water supply and money to repair." (Ila)

Disobedience of the law by truck drivers – "...significant damage to lawns, mailboxes, fire hydrants, power poles, road signs and more. While police try to enforce the road restrictions, most of the time the driver [flees]" (Pooler)

Even with the current variance, city officials cite chronic damage to roads as well as concerns related to public safety and quality of life (**see Box 1**). Any increase in the weight limit would impair cities' ability to respond to the multifaceted and financially burdensome impact of heavy trucks and demand significantly more resources for communities to deal with those impacts, including:



Funding for road and highway rehabilitation, bridge rehabilitation and roadway enhancements.



Authority to cite overweight trucks and cite trucks for traffic infractions.

For example, in Fairburn, the reconstruction of roads to accommodate heavier trucks and buses exceeded \$5 million, and a separate \$5 million project was done to provide an alternative route for trucks to alleviate congestion.

"There is a **continual state of fear** around the square with the presence of trucks and the increasing presence of pedestrians. It is difficult for economic development when businesses must endure the presence of large threatening trucks in the middle of a square that is struggling to promote a safe pedestrian experience." (Jackson)

Box 1. According to city leaders who see these impacts week after week, heavier trucks are...

- **Cracking** pavement
- **Creating** potholes
- **Warping** roadbeds, which then collect water and create a hydroplaning risk
- **Damaging** hydrants, curbs, landscaping and handicap ramps
- **Downing** street signage and traffic signal poles
- **Striking** utility poles and overhead wires, creating trip hazards
- **Snapping** trees
- **Crumbling** shoulder lanes, streetscapes, parking lots and roundabouts
- **Busting** pipes, water mains, culverts, gutters, drain lids and other stormwater infrastructure
- **Closing** bridges
- **Running** stop signs
- **Ignoring** speed limits
- **Not driving** in their designated lanes
- **Illegally parking**
- **Dodging** blocked railroad crossings
- **Hitting and damaging** cars
- **Spilling** toxic chemicals into rivers
- **Spreading** debris, dust and dirt
- **Threatening** local businesses that have seen their roofs torn off, windows broken and parking lots and buildings damaged
- **Causing** noise and traffic concerns

Conclusion

- Georgia cities recognize the economic value of having industries nearby and supplying jobs to residents, but they acknowledge that infrastructure and public safety **risks outweigh the benefits**.
- Small and rural towns **especially cannot afford** to address these problems, yet their roads are being used - sometimes illegally - by trucks to reach their destinations.
- Local roads were designed to allow for sidewalks, utility poles, fire hydrants and other facilities that form a community - **not to accommodate 90,000-pound trucks**.
- In addition to no increased weight limit, **Georgia cities are asking for:**
 - Local roads to be converted to state routes in heavily traveled truck corridors;
 - Truck corridors or zones close to shipping or logistics centers for trucks to travel before getting onto the general roadway network;
 - Enhancements to rail infrastructure to reduce need for movement of goods by truck;
 - Increased GDOT standards for subgrade and paving;
 - Stronger sanctions and municipal authority to affect risky behavior by truck drivers; and
 - More GDOT funding for road improvements.