

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2459

As Passed House:

February 5, 1996

Title: An act relating to tire factors in maximum gross weights.

Brief Description: Adjusting tire factors for vehicle maximum gross weights.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Clements, Skinner, Schoesler, Silver and Johnson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/16/96 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/5/96, 96-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 26 members: Representatives K. Schmidt, Chairman; Benton, Vice Chairman; Mitchell, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; R. Fisher, Ranking Minority Member; Hatfield, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Brown; Buck; Cairnes; Chandler; Chopp; Elliot; Hankins; Horn; Johnson; McMahan; Ogden; Patterson; Quall; Robertson; Romero; D. Schmidt; Scott; Sterk and Tokuda.

Staff: Mary McLaughlin (786-7309).

Background: On January 1, 1997, legislation will take effect that requires any axle carrying more than 10,000 pounds to be equipped with four or more tires. In lieu of four tires, an axle may be equipped with two tires that limit the amount of weight the vehicle tire may support to 500 pounds per inch of width. The nonliftable steering axle on a power unit, a tiller axle on a fire-fighting apparatus, and a rear booster trailing axle on a ready-mix cement truck are exempt from the 500-pound restriction and may continue to carry the current limit of 600 pounds per inch of tire width. The new restrictions were designed to require vehicle operators who had deliberately removed one tire from a set of duals to replace the tire, thereby relieving the stress on the highway.

The straddle trailer, which is primarily used to transport fruit bins from the field to storage, was overlooked as an exception. The straddle trailer was designed to operate on individually suspended axles containing one tire. When the trailer hauls a fruit that is particularly dense, such as pears, the transporter will be forced to haul fewer bins, or the harvester will be forced to restrict the volume per bin in order to comply with the 500 pounds per inch width. This will place a burden on the harvester's handling and storage of the perishable fruit and will increase the number of trips required to accomplish the harvest.

Both the industry and the Department of Transportation (DOT) have looked at the possibility of retrofitting the trailers with wider tires. Existing trailers cannot accommodate the retrofit without exceeding the legal width limit of 8.5 feet. The agreed upon solution is twofold: (1) existing trailers will be allowed to continue to operate at 600 pounds per inch width of tire; and (2) through a redesign effort agreed upon by the industry, new trailers can operate at 515 pounds per inch width of tire when using 16.5-inch wide tires. The redesign will not affect the carrying capacity of the trailer and will keep the vehicle within the legal width limit.

Summary of Bill: A straddle trailer used exclusively to transport fruit bins between the field, storage and processing is subject to the following tire requirements: (1) A trailer manufactured before January 1, 1996, that is equipped with single-tire axles or a single axle walking beam may continue to operate at 600 pounds per inch width of tire; and (2) a trailer manufactured after January 1, 1996, may carry 515 pounds per inch width of tire on a 16.5-inch wide tire.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This compromise is necessary for the efficient movement of fruit bins from the field to storage and has been agreed upon by the Department of Transportation and industry.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Jim Clements, prime sponsor; Representative Mary Skinner, secondary sponsor; David Reed, Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Association; Jim Kunz, Carrier Transports Inc.; and Keith Mathews, Zirkle Fruit Company.