Policy Memorandum
April 2015

The 114th Congress has an opportunity to make meaningful changes to transportation policy through a proposal that increases safety, productivity and environmental benefits in the less-than-truckload (LTL) freight market.

Proposal
Without making any changes to weight limits, extend the length of twin trailers by five feet – from 28’ to 33’ – to provide increased stability on the road and improve efficiency by as much as 18 percent.

Language
Section 31111(b)(1)(A) of title 49 is amended –

By striking the words “or of less than 28 feet on a semitrailer or trailer operating in a truck tractor-semitrailer-trailer combination,” and inserting the words “or, notwithstanding section 31112, of less than 33 feet on a semitrailer or trailer operating in a truck tractor-semitrailer-trailer combination.”

Background The less-than-truckload freight market is of vital importance to the national economy. Some 85 percent of LTL freight is manufactured goods. More than 9.4 million customers are served daily by the industry in all 50 states.

• Switching to 33 foot trailers would save 6.6 million trips, eliminate 1.3 billion miles driven and reduce carbon emissions by 4.4 billion pounds annually.

• Based on U.S. Department of Transportation figures, the change to twin 33s would result in 912 fewer crashes on America’s highways every year.

• A modest extension of five feet per trailer would increase the cubic capacity by 18 percent. This would eliminate the need for every ninth truck in the LTL industry, thus creating more space on our highways.

• According to analysis from a University of Michigan researcher, adding length would improve the handling properties of twin trailers.1 The academic research is supported by real-world evidence from twin 33s’ sterling safety records in Florida and North Dakota.

1The 2011 analysis by John Woodroofe and John De Pont, “Comparative Performance Evaluation of Proposed 33 ft Double Trailers Combinations with Existing 28 ft Double Trailers,” was prepared for Con-way Inc. and FedEx Corporation.