



**Legislative Council Staff**  
*Research Note*

Version: Final

Date: 3/27/2017

**Bill Number**

**House Bill 17-1061**

**Sponsors**

***Representatives Becker J., &  
Melton  
Senators Scott & Todd***

**Short Title**

***Modify Definition of a  
Commercial Vehicle***

**Research Analyst**

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**Status**

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which was signed by the Governor and became effective March 20, 2017.

**Background**

Under Colorado law, a commercial vehicle is defined as a vehicle used in commerce and weighing at least 10,000 pounds that is self-propelled, towed, or designed to transport 16 or more passengers. Vehicles that are used for the commercial transportation of other motor vehicles or for hazardous materials transportation are included with the definition of a "commercial vehicle." School buses and certain agricultural vehicles are excluded from the definition.

The state and federal governments have established vehicle weight limits on vehicles operating on state and interstate highways, as shown in the table below. A commercial vehicle's gross combined vehicle weight rating (GCWR) is the maximum permissible loaded weight for a towing vehicle and its trailer. This includes the vehicle's fuel, passengers, and cargo. Trucks and truck/trailer combinations with an empty weight exceeding 16,000 pounds and any vehicle with a GCWR exceeding 26,000 pounds must receive clearance through the state's Ports of Entry managed by the Colorado State Patrol (CSP). Vehicles exceeding these weight thresholds must also clear all ports of entry that are within five miles of the route on which they are traveling, unless the operator has previously secured a clearance or obtained a special permit.

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The National Highway System (NHS) is approximately 160,000 miles of roadway including the interstate, principal arterials, the strategic highway network, and intermodal connectors. The table below also provides information on federal and state size and weight limits for motor vehicles operating on state highways and the NHS in Colorado.

**Table 1  
Federal and State Motor Vehicle Size and Weight Limits**

Vehicle	Federal Regulations	State Law
Overall Vehicle Length	No federal length limit is imposed on most truck tractor-semitrailers operating on the National Highway System (NHS). However, on the NHS, combination vehicles designed and used specifically to carry automobiles or boats in specially designed racks may not exceed a maximum overall vehicle length of 65 feet, or 75 feet, depending on the type of connection between the tractor and trailer.	45-foot maximum overall single vehicle length  70-foot combination length on all roads
Trailer Length	Federal law provides that no state can impose a length limitation of less than 48 feet (or longer if provided for by grandfather rights) on a semitrailer operating in any truck tractor-semitrailer combination on the NHS. A state may permit longer trailers to operate on its national network highways.  Similarly, federal law provides that no state can impose a length limitation of less than 28 feet on a semitrailer or trailer operating in a truck tractor-semitrailer-trailer combination on the NHS.	57.3-foot semitrailer on state, supplemental, and NHS highways  28.5-foot trailer length on state, supplemental, and NHS highways
Vehicle Width	On the NHS, states are restricted to vehicle width limitations of 8.5 feet.	8.5 feet
Single Vehicle Weight w/Two Axles	36,000 pounds	36,000 pounds
Single Vehicle Weight w/Three or More Axles	54,000 pounds	54,000 pounds
Truck/Trailer or Combination of Vehicles	80,000 pounds	85,000 pounds

Source: Legislative Council Staff

## House Action

**House Transportation & Energy Committee (February 8, 2017).** At the hearing, a representative of the Colorado Motor Carriers Association testified in support of the bill. The committee referred the bill to the House Committee of the Whole.

**House second reading (February 13, 2017).** The House passed the bill on second reading with no amendments.

**House third reading (February 15, 2017).** The House passed the bill on third reading with no amendments.

## Senate Action

**Senate Transportation Committee (February 28, 2017).** At the hearing, representatives of the Colorado Motor Carriers Association testified in support of the bill. The committee referred the bill to the Senate Committee on the Whole with the recommendation that it be placed on the consent calendar.

**Senate second reading (March 3, 2017).** The Senate passed the bill on second reading with no additional amendments.

**Senate third reading (March 6, 2017).** The Senate passed the bill on third reading with no additional amendments.

## Relevant Research

Legislative Council Staff, *2017 Colorado Motor Vehicle Law Resource Book*, <http://leg.colorado.gov/content/commercial-vehicle-motor-carrier-regulation>.