

February 18, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

As the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee prepares the safety title to accompany a surface transportation reauthorization bill, the 66 undersigned organizations write to express strong support for H.R. 2453, the Safe Routes Act, and urge its inclusion in the forthcoming title. The Safe Routes Act will provide for the safer transportation of raw forest products by allowing trucks access to the interstate highway system at state legal truck weights and configurations.

The Safe Routes Act would improve the safety of log trucks hauling raw forest products that include logs, pulpwood, biomass, and chips in nearly 30 states. Trucks transporting raw forest products are forced to travel state highways and rural routes where gross vehicle weights are typically higher than on the federal interstate system. This creates a scenario in which trucks must take two-lane roads that pass through urban areas, school zones, and numerous intersections, all the while facing oncoming traffic. All these variables increase the odds of an accident.

The Safe Routes Act would allow log trucks access to an interstate route, which is 3-6 times safer than secondary roads when an interstate route is available (25-40 percent). Additional key measures of the bill include a travel limit of 150 air-miles from the point of origin to storage or processing facility and an enactment clause which locks in that state's current maximum weight limit when the bill is signed.

The safety benefits of the Safe Routes Act are supported by recent research. A study published in 2018 of log trucks in Georgia showed that 50 percent of accidents occurred in urban areas. This same study also showed that 41 percent of the log truck accidents occurred within 5 miles of an interstate (Conrad J. L., 2018). A nationwide study published in 2019 of fatal log truck crashes in the U.S. stated that the most common pre-crash event occurred when another vehicle traveled into the truck's lane from the opposite direction (Cole, 2019). Both these studies suggest that moving log trucks to interstates would be safer. This suggestion is supported by a pilot project in Maine, where trucks hauling up to 100,000 pounds can use the interstate system. The Maine Department of Transportation statistics showed that truck crashes decreased 25 percent and the number of fatalities decreased by 37 percent after the pilot went into effect.

Initial results from two pilot projects supported by the Forest Resources Association and the Georgia Forestry Foundation strongly reinforce the safety, efficiency, and environmental benefits of the Safe Routes Act. They show that the interstate route is two to three times safer, reduces exposure to intersections by 65-93 percent, decreases travel through towns by 67-86 percent, reduces travel time by 26-43 percent, and results in 12-16 percent fewer carbon dioxide emissions when the interstate route is traveled instead of the non-interstate route (Conrad J. L., 2020).

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. We look forward to working with you to include the Safe Routes Act in the Senate Commerce Committee's forthcoming safety title to accompany a surface transportation reauthorization package.

Contact: *Tim O'Hara, Director, Government Affairs, Forest Resources Association*
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Sincerely,

1. Alabama Forestry Association
2. Alabama Loggers Council
3. Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group Inc.
4. American Forest and Paper Association
5. American Forest Resource Council
6. American Loggers Council
7. Arkansas Forestry Association
8. Arkansas Timber Producers Association
9. Associated California Loggers
10. Associated Contract Loggers & Truckers of Minnesota
11. Associated Logging Contractors, Inc. – Idaho
12. Associated Oregon Loggers
13. Association of Consulting Foresters
14. Biomass Power Association
15. Black Hills Forest Resource Association
16. Carolina Loggers Association
17. Colorado Timber Industry Association
18. Decorative Hardwoods Association
19. Federal Forest Resource Coalition
20. Florida Forestry Association

21. Forest Landowners Association
22. Forest Resources Association
23. Forestry Association of South Carolina
24. Georgia Forestry Association
25. Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
26. Hardwood Federation
27. Intermountain Forest Association
28. Kentucky Forest Industries Association
29. Louisiana Forestry Association
30. Louisiana Logging Council
31. Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association
32. Massachusetts Forest Alliance
33. Michigan Forest Products Council
34. Minnesota Forest Industries
35. Minnesota Timber Producers Association
36. Mississippi Forestry Association
37. Mississippi Loggers Association
38. Missouri Loggers Council
39. National Alliance of Forest Owners
40. National Association of State Foresters
41. National Wood Flooring Association
42. New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association
43. New Hampshire Timber Harvesting Council
44. North Carolina Forestry Association
45. Northeastern Loggers Association
46. Ohio Forestry Association, Inc.
47. Oregon Women in Timber
48. Pennsylvania Forestry Association
49. Professional Logging Contractors of Maine
50. Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
51. Society of American Foresters
52. South Carolina Timber Producers Association

53. Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association Inc.
54. Southeastern Wood Producers Association
55. Southern Loggers Cooperative
56. Tennessee Forestry Association
57. Texas Forestry Association
58. Texas Logging Council
59. Treated Wood Council
60. Virginia Forestry Association
61. Virginia Loggers Association
62. Washington Contract Loggers Association, Inc.
63. West Virginia Forestry Association, Inc
64. West Virginia Loggers Council
65. Western Wood Preservers Institute
66. Wisconsin Paper Council

Citations:

- Cole, N. B. (2019). An analysis of fatal log truck crashes in the United States from 2011 through 2015. *International Journal of Forest Engineering*.
- Conrad, J. L. (2018). Analysis of timber transportation accident frequency, location, and contributing factors in Georgia, USA 2006-2016. *International Journal of Forest Engineering*.
- Conrad, J. L. (2020). Safety and Efficiency of State-Legal Log Trucks on Intersate Highways in Four Georgia Wood Baskets. *Warnell School of Forestry, University Georgia*.