



Issue Brief



Safe Routes Act (H.R. 2453, S. 1509)

October 2020

Safe Routes Act

- Provisions of the Safe Routes Act allows trucks transporting logs, pulpwood, chips or biomass access to the safer U.S. Interstate Highway System at legal state GVW.
- Limits transportation distance to 150 air miles from point of harvest to storage or processing facility on interstates which are 4-6 times safer than rural secondary roads.
- Provides for state legal weight tolerance in effect on the enactment date of the legislation. States cannot arbitrarily raise their weight limits after the bill is passed into law.
- Reduces pedestrian and vehicle encounters with log trucks.
- Saves fuel, reduces emissions and reduces damage on state rural roads.
- Improves the U.S. forest industry's global competitiveness.

Why FRA Supports the Safe Routes Act

Fifty states allow gross vehicle weights (GVW) higher on their roads than the U.S. Interstate Highway System. Loggers choose to haul on non-interstate rural roads rather than adding the costs of increasing fleet size to travel with less weight on the safer interstate system. Log trucks traveling on non-interstate roads have a greater risk of accidents as they encounter two-way traffic, intersections, school zones, pedestrians and driveways. Allowing trucks transporting logs, pulpwood, chips or biomass access to the safer U.S. Interstate Highway System at legal state GVW is safer.

- A 2020 study published in the peer reviewed International Journal of Forest Engineering assessed the safety benefits of allowing log trucks access to the interstate highway system. The results of the research show that allowing state-legal truck weights and configurations access to an interstate route for a short distance that avoided small towns, school districts, and intersections would improve safety, reduce CO2 emissions, cause less damage to rural roads and reduce transportation costs for small logging businesses (Conrad, 2020).
- Another separate study 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, 2018).
- Findings of a nationwide study of fatal log truck crashes in the U.S. stated that the most common pre-crash event occurred when another vehicle traveled into a truck's lane from the opposite direction (Cole, 2019).
- All of these studies suggest that moving log trucks to interstates would be safer.
- This suggestion is supported by a pilot project in Maine where trucks are permitted to haul heavier weights. The Maine Department of Transportation statistics showed that truck accidents decreased 25 percent and the number of fatalities decreased by 37 percent after the pilot went into effect.
- The Maine pilot is consistent with national findings that rural interstate highways are three to four times safer than secondary roads (Maine DOT, 2010).
- Does not impact railroads as raw forest products only vector from the woods to a storage or processing facility is by truck.
- Less fuel is used due to fewer stops and shifting.

Request: Support inclusion of the Safe Routes Act Provisions in the Highway Surface Bill Reauthorization.

About FRA

The Forest Resources Association (FRA) represents the interests of nearly 300 organizations and businesses in the forest products industry. Our members include forest landowners, suppliers, consuming mills, associated businesses, and state forestry associations. FRA members are represented in 48 states and 320 Congressional Districts.

FRA's Vision is to be recognized for its diverse membership and commitment to sustaining the success of the forest products industry.

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