

# Why FRA Supports The Safe Routes Act (H.R. 2213)

September 2021



- Provisions of the Safe Routes Act allow trucks transporting logs, pulpwood, wood 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 three to four 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 and reduces emissions and damage on state rural roads.
- Improves the U.S. forest industry's global competitiveness

In the U.S., weight limits on interstate highways are established by the federal government, while weight limits on other roadways are established by state or local governments. State weight limits for log trucks exceed federal interstate highway weight limits in all major timber-producing states. This disparity discourages log trucks from traveling loaded on interstate highways. 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 raw forest products (logs, pulpwood, chips, or biomass) access to the U.S. Interstate Highway System at legal state gross vehicle weight (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 avoids 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% of accidents occurred in urban areas. This same study also showed that 41% of the log truck accidents occurred within five 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 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 23%, fatalities decreased by 33%, and property damage was reduced by 11% 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).
- The Safe Routes Act allows trucks transporting logs, pulpwood, wood chips, or biomass access to the safer U.S. Interstate Highway System at legal state GVW.
- The Safe Routes Act provisions do not impact railroads, as the only vector to transport raw forest products from the woods to a storage or processing facility is by truck.
- Reduces the carbon footprint of transporting raw forest products as less fuel is used due to fewer stops and shifting, and a shorter, more direct route provided by the interstate.
- Will increase the U.S. forest industry's global competitiveness. Canada, Mexico, and almost all of Europe have a competitive advantage in logistics over the United States, utilizing a GVW of at least 95,000 lbs on six axles. In today's marketplace, the economy and private sector need a partner in the U.S. Government that will allow it to compete fairly and competitively.

## Request:

- ❖ **Cosponsor the Safe Routes Act (H.R. 2213)**

## About FRA:

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

The Mission of FRA is to promote the interests of its members in the economic, efficient, and sustainable use of forest resources to meet the needs of the wood fiber supply chain through private enterprise. FRA members are represented in 49 states and 377 congressional districts.

For more information, please contact:

- Deb Hawkinson, FRA President, 202-296-3937 or [dhawkinson@forestresources.org](mailto:dhawkinson@forestresources.org)
- Tim O'Hara, FRA Vice President, Government Affairs, 218-390-7965 or [tohara@forestresources.org](mailto:tohara@forestresources.org)

