



Issue Brief



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

September 2019

Safe Routes Act

- 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 can't arbitrarily raise their weight limits after the bill is passed into law.
- Reduces pedestrian and vehicle encounters with trucks.
- Saves fuel and reduces emissions.
- Improves the U.S. forest industry's global competitiveness.

Why FRA Supports the Safe Routes Act

Fifty states have higher gross vehicle weights (GVW) 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 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).
- 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).
- 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 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: Cosponsor or Support the Safe Routes Act (H.R. 2453, S. 1509).

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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