

## **Lower Emissions and Safer Streets Through Interstate Routing LESS TIRing**

**A study found that nearly 78% of all log truck fatal crashes occurred in the Southeast portion of the United States. In these states, oncoming cars infringing on the logging trucks' lanes were the leading cause of logging truck accidents. These accidents account for 20% of all log truck accidents and often occur on rural roads.**

The logistical transportation challenges of the supply chain are affecting all industry sectors. Timber transport capacity is no exception.

However, efficiency improvements can increase capacity within limited resources. A simple no-cost opportunity to increase capacity, reduce truck trips, reduce fuel consumption, reduce carbon emissions, and improve safety was introduced in the House of Representatives' "Safe Routes Act of 2021" (H.R. 2213), with bipartisan support.

Additionally, consideration to incorporate legislation established by precedent in Wisconsin and other states to grandfather local / state road systems being transferred into the Interstate System must be authorized to maintain access and the weight limits as previously permitted. Loss of these routes will increase truck trips, fuel consumption, miles transited, and carbon emissions and transfer semi-truck traffic onto less safe rural routes. Maintaining and continuing the weight limits on these roadways does not change what they were subject to previously.

There is precedent for another "targeted" option of identifying and designating priority corridors within each state to address high-priority transportation routes. The legislation was passed in 2015 allowing a 23-mile corridor in Minnesota to access the federal Interstate System with logging trucks at 99,000 pounds. This authorization removed logging trucks from downtown cobblestone roads in Duluth, Minnesota, and took them out of residential / school zones.

**Giving loggers access to the federal interstate system will help offset the projected diesel price increases.**

**THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION HAS AN OPPORTUNITY (BASED ON THE STAFFORD ACT) TO ISSUE A NATIONAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION REGARDING THE DIESEL FUEL SHORTAGE TO:**

- **REDUCE MILES TRAVELED**
- **INCREASE FUEL EFFICIENCY**
- **REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS**
- **IMPROVE SAFETY**

**AMERICAN LOGGERS COUNCIL**

The following request was submitted to the White House after a meeting with officials: The American Loggers Council respectfully requests that President Biden, under the authority of the Stafford Act, issue a National Emergency Declaration regarding the diesel fuel crisis. Diesel fuel costs are near record highs, and current inventories are at record lows. This supply and demand imbalance is anticipated to increase costs above the current level and potentially cause supply disruptions. The economic impacts of escalating diesel prices and potential rationing will contribute to further inflationary increases and result in transportation capacity reductions, particularly within the timber industry sector. The timber industry supplies the raw materials for all forest product manufacturers, with a \$300 billion-dollar U.S. economic impact.

The Administration recognizes the economic threat that the current diesel prices and supply represent to the supply chain of all sectors of the economy and has taken emergency actions to stabilize and reduce diesel fuel costs.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), maintained by the United States Department of Energy, is the largest "emergency" supply in the world, established primarily to reduce the impacts of disruptions in the supply of petroleum products. The Administration has released one million barrels of oil per day from the SPR, beginning in March 2022, for a total of 180 million barrels. This "emergency" action was required due to geopolitical events that threaten and disrupt the supply of petroleum products.

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, as notified through the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the State of Iowa issued a Proclamation of Disaster Emergency addressing the "extensive challenges" to access fuels and therefore issued waivers on Hours-of-Service limitations to drivers transporting fuel. This Disaster Emergency Proclamation also allows petroleum transportation trucks to transport heavier loads (90,000 pounds) "except on federal interstates." This action further confirms the "emergency" situation threatening the supply of fuel products in Iowa.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, as distributed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the State of Nebraska issued an Executive Order, Emergency Relief Due to Fuel Supply Shortages, stating that due to high demand and logistical delays, (it) "finds that these conditions constitute an emergency and meet the purpose of facilitating a waiver to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, specifically Hours of Service of Drivers." Therefore, a temporary waiver of federal requirements under Hours of Service of Drivers for the limited purpose of hauling gasoline or gasoline blends, diesel, fuel oil, ethanol, propane, and biodiesel has been ordered. Again, the fuel crisis constituted an "emergency" situation in Nebraska and warranted the waiver of federal regulations.

Based on the "emergency" intent of the Strategic Petroleum Reserves and the Administration's actions supporting the petroleum "emergency" by releasing reserves to maintain the stability of petroleum markets; the State of Iowa Proclamation of Disaster

Emergency regarding waivers to Hours of Service for drivers and truck weights; and Nebraska's Executive Order waiving federal Hours of Service regulations for truck drivers transporting petroleum products, it is clear that President Biden would be warranted in declaring a National Emergency Declaration under the authority of the Stafford Act.

Within President Biden's authority of the National Emergency Declaration, the American Loggers Council requests that Interstate Truck Weights be waived for raw unfinished timber and agricultural products corresponding to raw unfinished timber and agricultural products' state weight limits.

There are limited short-term options to increase supply and reduce diesel fuel prices. However, allowing trucks that are currently operating on non-interstate road systems with state-established weights to access the federal interstate systems at these same weights will allow for more direct, safer, and efficient routes, thus indirectly reducing transportation expenses; allowing for fewer miles traveled; increasing miles per gallon (10%-20%); and reducing carbon emissions.

There is ample precedent to support this request. Logging trucks in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont are authorized via federal legislation to transport raw unfinished timber products up to 100,000 pounds on federal interstates within those states. In 2015, the State of Minnesota was authorized via Congressional legislation for logging trucks to access a 23-mile segment of the federal interstate system at weights of 99,000 pounds. Recent Congressional legislation grandfathered road systems that were state highways incorporated into the federal interstate system in North Carolina and Wisconsin to allow logging trucks at the prior state weights to continue accessing these roadways at the higher weights.

Additionally, comprehensive studies in Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, and the University of Georgia of the accident rates for logging trucks after routing onto the federal interstate system and off of state and local roads confirmed a significant reduction in accidents overall.

In summary, the diesel fuel crisis has immediate negative economic and societal impacts that threaten supply chain logistics, home heating oil supply, cost, and business viability. Ongoing state and federal emergency responses confirm the urgency of the situation. Immediate options to increase supply and reduce costs are extremely limited. A National Emergency Declaration would allow federal action to authorize raw timber products and agricultural product transportation via the federal interstate system at truck weights equal to current state weight limits. Instead of decreasing costs at the pump, this approach would decrease operational costs by reducing miles traveled, increasing fuel efficiency, and increasing the volume transported. This would be a no-cost option that is supported by Congressional precedent. Furthermore, emission improvements would be realized as an added environmental benefit, as well as safety improvements.

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

To amend title 23, United States Code, with respect to vehicle weight limitations for certain logging vehicles, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. GALLAGHER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

**A BILL**

To amend title 23, United States Code, with respect to vehicle weight limitations for certain logging vehicles, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "Safe Routes Act of  
5 2023".

6 **SEC. 2. VEHICLE WEIGHT EXEMPTIONS.**

7 Section 127 of title 23, United States Code, is  
8 amended by adding at the end the following:

1 "(x) CERTAIN LOGGING VEHICLES.—

2 "(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall waive,  
3 with respect to a covered logging vehicle, the appli-  
4 cation of any vehicle weight limit established under  
5 this section.

6 "(2) COVERED LOGGING VEHICLE DEFINED.—

7 In this subsection, the term 'covered logging vehicle'  
8 means a vehicle that—

9 "(A) is transporting raw or unfinished for-  
10 est products, including logs, pulpwood, biomass,  
11 or wood chips;

12 "(B) is traveling a distance not greater  
13 than 150 air miles on the Interstate from origin  
14 to a storage or processing facility; and

15 "(C) meets State legal weight tolerances  
16 and vehicle configurations for transporting raw  
17 or unfinished forest products within the State  
18 boundaries in which the vehicle is operating.

19 "(3) APPLICATION OF WEIGHT TOLERANCES.—

20 The waiver in this subsection shall only apply with  
21 respect to a State legal weight tolerance in effect on  
22 the date of enactment of this subsection."