

JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 625: Michigan Log Truck Routes

November 3, 2021

Good morning Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for taking time today to hear Senate Bill 625 establishing several additional routes in Northern Wisconsin for Michigan configured log trucks. I introduced this bill at the request of the Great Lakes Timber Producers Association and Lake States Lumber Association to provide for more efficient transport of logs to Wisconsin mills and storage facilities and to and from Upper Michigan.

Analysis by the Department of Natural Resources indicates the forest products industry in Wisconsin provides more than 64,000 jobs in the state and has a total industry output of \$24.5 billion each year. The industry ranks 11th in the state in terms of jobs and is the number one employer in ten counties and ranked in the top ten employers in 31 additional counties. It is an extremely important industry to the state as a whole, and even more so to the North Woods.

Michigan configured logging trucks have been allowed to operate on Wisconsin roads within eleven miles of the Michigan Wisconsin boarder for many years. Over the last decade we have incrementally added routes outside this boarder region to help the industry operate more efficiently. These truck configurations offer greater efficiency for the industry by carrying larger loads while mitigating impacts to road surfaces through use of additional axles.

While the additional axles can lessen the impacts to pavements, the gross weight of these vehicles can present an issue for structures like bridges and culverts. At the request of the industry the Department of Transportation (DOT) has reviewed the new proposed routes to ensure they do not include any structures that would be problematic. I commend the industry and the department for working together to ensure safety and protect the taxpayer's investment in our roads and bridges, while improving the efficiency of our transportation network.

After this bill was circulated we received requests for two additional routes that are included in Senate Amendment 1. These routes have been reviewed by the DOT and do not present issues with structures.

Again, thank you for taking the time to hear this bill this morning, and I would be happy to answer any question.

29TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Testimony in Support of 2021 Senate Bill 625

Chairman, Petrowski and Committee Members,

Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, (GLTPA) its board of directors and members fully support Senate Bill 625.

Efficient and productive transportation of forest products is a key factor in sustaining Wisconsin's remaining forest products manufacturers and this legislation will be helpful to meet that goal. As you may remember Wisconsin's Northeast forests suffered tremendous damage in July of 2019 when multiple storms swept through the area damaging thousands of acres of forestland.

In an effort to cleanup the aftermath and quickly and utilize the damaged timber before spoilage occurred, Governor Evers with the approval of Wisconsin Department of Transportation engineers, issued an emergency order allowing multi-axle configured trucks to safely travel several highways within the storm damaged area under Emergency Order 35. At the request of the forest industry, the E.O. was reinstated in 2020 and 2021, and proved to be very effective in recovering thousands if not millions of dollars of raw material before it became stained and spoiled. For that landowners, loggers, and mills, are very thankful.

What was learned during this period is that these multi-axled trucks not only increased production and efficiency, but there were less vehicle miles traveled, which equates to better safety, whereby fewer Green House Gas emissions are emitted. If the key routes proposed in this legislation are approved, these benefits will be realized long term in this area of the state.

Along with our testimony a map is included which shows the exact routes to be added to the current list of routes on what is referred to as the Michigan Boarder Permit. The blue line represents the original boarder permit which has been in place for more than 40 years. Several of the red routes were added to the permit beginning in approximately 2008 and the black routes are those proposed in this legislation.

Before asking for this legislation, GLTPA worked closely with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and its engineers to verify that these routes are suitable to be added permanently to the Michigan Boarder permit. Secretary Thompson and his team have been exceptionally responsive to our transportation

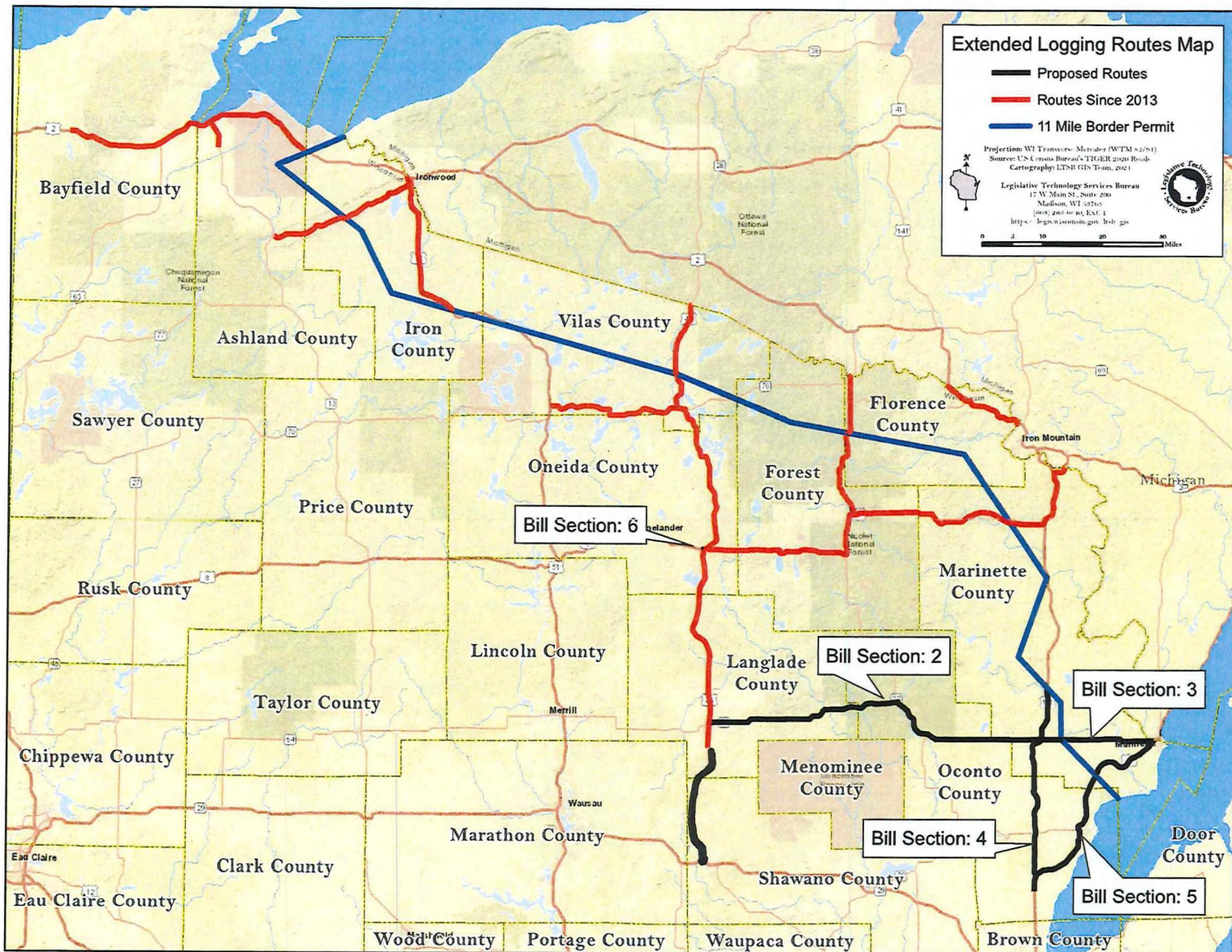


needs. As you can imagine, examining these routes takes time as every culvert, bridge and mile of road must be carefully scrutinized to ensure infrastructure investments are not prematurely damaged before planned replacement occurs. Based on current routes approved in years past, it is safe to determine that all the goals of creating more efficient truck transportation while ensuring Wisconsin's infrastructure is maintained have been met.

Although these routes are short in distance, they play a key role in connecting multiple wood markets and will be utilized by several trucking companies and wood consuming mills in this region. In addition, the proposed routes are not meant to replace rail, but to work with rail and create as many efficiencies as possibly.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to your consideration and passage of SB 625.

Henry Schienebeck
Executive Director, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association





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**Testimony of Assistant Deputy Secretary Joel Nilsestuen before the Senate Committee on
Transportation and Local Government on Senate Bill 625
November 3, 2021**

Thank you, Chairman Petrowski and committee members for the opportunity to speak for informational purposes on Senate Bill 625.

Currently, Wisconsin Statute 348.27(9) authorizes the department to issue oversize/overweight permits on specified highways so long as the vehicle or combination of vehicles does not violate length or weight limitations under Michigan law. Michigan law allows oversize/overweight vehicles to operate at a maximum gross weight of 164,000 pounds, provided appropriate truck configurations and axle placements are followed. The route must be specified in the statute before the department may issue permits to operate upon it.

The department conducted engineering analyses of the 68 bridges and 214 miles of pavement for all requested routes and compared the current Michigan truck configurations to standard configurations of 5-axle trucks at the legal limit of 80,000 pounds, 5-axle trucks at 90,000 pounds and 6-axle trucks at 98,000 pounds that are currently permitted. Overall, the department found:

- The bridges on the additional routes all have adequate capacity to carry current Michigan truck configurations. There is one structure (B-34-842; STH 64 over Spring Brook) that is in poor condition, but the replacement project for this bridge was let last summer, so it shouldn't be an issue going forward.
- The comparison shows an overall neutral impact to pavements. However, it's important to note that not all pavement structures are designed to handle oversize/overweight loads, regardless of truck configuration. In particular, the highway segments considered were not all built to the same structural equivalency. During pavement structure design, the underlying soils, anticipated traffic counts and number of trucks are used to determine the required pavement structure thickness; therefore, some lower functional class highways (i.e., lower average daily traffic and corresponding truck traffic) have not been designed to carry the same loads as those highways with higher estimated traffic volumes.

These impacts assume that allowing heavier loads will require fewer trucks to haul the same total amount of timber. The department also notes heavier truck traffic will cause bridge decks and pavements to deteriorate at an accelerated rate. Unfortunately, the department cannot quantify the exact impacts given the variety of parameters that contribute to deterioration.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.