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Assembly Committee on Transportation
Representative VanderMeer-Chair
Hearing Room 417 North (GAR Hall)
State Capitol Building
Madison WI 53708

Chair Vandermeer and Committee Members,

Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, (GLTPA) its Board of Directors and members fully support Assembly Bill 511.

Efficient, productive transportation of raw forest products is a key factor in sustaining Wisconsin's remaining forest products manufacturers and this legislation will help 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.

To quickly utilize the damaged timber before spoilage in the storm's aftermath, the Governor along with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation issued Emergency Order 35 allowing multi-axle configured trucks to travel several highways within the storm damaged area. At the request of the forest industry, the E.O. was reinstated in 2020 and 2021, and proved to be highly effective in recovering thousands, if not millions of dollars of raw material before it became stained and unusable.

What was learned during this period is that multi-axle, lower axle weight trucks not only increased transportation efficiency, but safety was also improved with less vehicle miles traveled, and fewer Green House Gas emissions were emitted. Passage of AB 511 will ensure these benefits are realized to an even greater extent.

The Michigan Boarder permit has been in use for more than 50 years. Since that time, several routes have been added to expand transportation efficiency. It is also worth noting that several of those routes have been tracked for damage and to the best of our knowledge, road wear has been normal or negligible with these lower axle weight vehicles.

Before seeking draft legislation, GLTPA works closely with Wisconsin Department of Transportation engineers to verify that these routes are suitable for addition to the Michigan Border 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 scrutinized to ensure



infrastructure investments are not prematurely damaged before planned replacement occurs. Based on routes which are currently in use under the Michigan Border Permit, 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. The proposed routes are not meant to replace rail, but to work with rail should it ever be brought back to the level of service required to transport raw wood fiber and create as many efficiencies as possible.

History shows us that Wisconsin and the region are currently experiencing a negative economic impact within the forest industry. Senator Jerry Petrowski, who sponsored SB 625 in 2021, testified that the Wisconsin DNR forest economic report showed Wisconsin having 64,000 jobs and generated \$24.5 billion of industry output. A more recent Wisconsin DNR report shows Wisconsin's Forest Industry to have 58,000 jobs and an economic impact of \$24.2 billion. This is a significant drop in jobs and economic value.

Overall, the cost of transportation is one of the highest costs for moving both raw and finished product. Efficient transportation such as that proposed with AB 511, is a proactive step toward keeping well-paying forest management and mill jobs in Wisconsin. Keeping Wisconsin's forestry industry economically viable supports other industries such as tourism. Healthy forests provide clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat and a variety of other benefits in place for everyone to enjoy. Wisconsin's healthy forests are the reason so many visitors come to Wisconsin. Healthy forests simply cannot exist without a healthy forestry industry and loggers to manage Wisconsin's forests.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to your consideration and passage of AB 511.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry Schienebeck".

Henry Schienebeck
Executive Director,
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Troy Brown".

Troy Brown
GLTPA President

Lake States Lumber Assn.

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TO: Assembly Committee on Transportation

FROM: Amy Boyer, on behalf of
Lake States Lumber Association

DATE: December 5, 2023

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 511

The Lake States Lumber Association (LSLA) is a broad cross-section of individuals and business organizations involved in the timber industry with a membership of 133 timber related businesses represented in 14 states and two Canadian Provinces.

LSLA has long advocated for the broader use of Michigan configured log trucks. This bill and the extension of miles for Michigan configured trucks will help our members operate more efficiently and safely.

Assembly Bill 511 adds an additional nine routes to the existing network of Michigan border timber routes. Efficient and affordable transportation continues to be a key issue for LSLA members. The addition of these routes, many along corridors where rail service was once available, will result in cost savings for shippers.

We thank Representative Mursau and Senator Tomczyk for their leadership and respectfully urge passage of this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.