



CORY TOMCZYK

STATE SENATOR • 29TH SENATE DISTRICT

Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government,

As many of you know, the timber industry is a critical sector of Wisconsin's economy.

In previous years, the state has designated a number of timber routes where Michigan Configured trucks are allowed to operate compared to Wisconsin's traditional restrictions on axle and weight requirements. These routes have sufficient structural and safety accommodations that allow these trucks to operate without risking excessive damage to structures or excessive safety risks.

As efficient, affordable transportation methods and staffing levels continue to be an issue throughout Wisconsin and the Lake States Region, we especially see this challenge in the transfer of raw material from strategically located storage facilities on major highway systems.

Short haul trucks deliver raw forest products directly to mills or in some situations to what are known as remote wood yards dedicated to wood storage for a specific consuming mill. These remote wood yards are located on major corridors and accessible year round in all weather.

Often, these storage facilities are in areas where rail transportation was at one time available, dependable, and cost effective. However, because of declines in service, trucks have now become the primary source of wood transfer.

With the addition of new routes to the Michigan border permit, this legislation reduce the total number of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), increase fuel efficiency resulting in reduced emissions, and provide important cost savings for shippers and end use consumers.

SB 484 comes at the request of the Great Lakes Timber Producers Association and Lake States Lumber Association and adds nine new and extends one existing timber route here in Wisconsin. As part of my testimony we've include a map of the existing and proposed timber routes.

This legislation was reviewed by WisDOT to ensure these routes do not contain structures that are problematic for the use of these trucks.



Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
SB 484 – Permits for certain oversize or overweight vehicles transporting forest products

October 24, 2023

Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 484, related to permits for certain oversize or overweight vehicles transporting forest products. I'd like to thank my co-author, Chairperson Tomczyk for working with me on this bill, which will be a great benefit to our partners in the forestry industry.

Under current law, with certain exceptions, it is necessary for a person to have a permit from the WI DOT to operate any vehicle on a highway that exceeds certain statutory limits on size, weight, or load. The DOT can also issue a permit that allows overweight loads within 11 miles of the Wisconsin-Michigan border and other specified highways as long as the vehicle does not violate length or weight limits under Michigan Law. This is known as the Michigan Border Permit. Senate Bill 484 adds ten highway segments to the Michigan border permit.

The value of having these contiguous routes in an area of operation was proven during the massive storm damage cleanup that occurred after July 19, 2019, after the Department of Transportation (DOT) implemented Executive Order 35. The Executive Order allowed Michigan configured trucks to utilize the proposed route extensions proving their value.

Efficient, affordable transportation continues to be an issue throughout Wisconsin and the Lake States Region. This is especially true when it comes to transfer of raw material from strategically located storage facilities on major highway systems. Short haul trucks deliver raw forest products directly to mills or in some situations to what are known as remote wood yards dedicated to wood storage for a specific consuming mill. These remote wood yards are located on major corridors and accessible year round in all weather. Many of these storage facilities are in areas where rail transportation was at one time available, dependable, and cost effective. However, because of declines in service, trucks have now become the primary source of wood transfer.

The Great Lakes Timber Producers and Lake States Lumber Association support this bill. I would like to thank the WI DOT for working with these groups to identify these routes and determining they are suitable to be added to the Michigan Border Permit.

Once again, thank you for holding a public hearing on this important piece of legislation. Please feel free to reach out to my office if you have any questions.

Lake States Lumber Assn.

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TO: Senate Transportation & Local Government Committee

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

DATE: October 24, 2023

RE: Support for Senate Bill 484

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.

Senate Bill 484 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 Senator Tomczyk and Representative Mursau for their leadership and respectfully urge passage of this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Incorporated in 1983 to provide representation to a broad cross-section of individuals and business organizations involved in the wood products industry, the Lake States Lumber Association's 133 members represent 14 states and two Canadian Provinces. The Association's primary objective is *Providing Leadership and Education to Assure the Sustainability of Our Forest Resources*. This objective is achieved by a network of committees and volunteers.

LSLA also has an education division that regularly provides training opportunities for employees in the wood products industry. LSLA Education also offers annual funding opportunities for organizations that provide education about the forest industry.

In a joint effort with other organizations including the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, The Hardwood Federation, and the National Hardwood Lumber Association, Lake States Lumber Association actively lobbies state and federal legislatures on pertinent issues affecting the wood products industry.

2022 Demographics

- 119 members in 11 states and 2 Provinces
- Members representing WI, MI, MN, IN, IA, IL, MA, NY, OR, NC, OH, Ontario & Quebec.
- 70 members from Wisconsin (59% of membership)

Economic Impact

According to a study commissioned by the Hardwood Federation, the Wisconsin hardwood industry directly and indirectly supports

- 56,400 jobs
- \$2.7 billion in labor income
- \$4.1 billion in Gross State Product
- \$10.0 billion in total revenue

For every \$1 million in revenue of hardwood products, 5.6 jobs and \$410,000 of GSP are supported in WI.

The LSLA membership is an active and important part of Wisconsin's hardwood industry.

Good Afternoon Senators and friends,

My name is Larry Krueger here with Pete Johnson to represent the Lake States Lumber Association. Lake States Lumber Association is a regional organization whose members produce or use our wonderful, renewable hardwood lumber. While we have members from all over the USA, most of our membership is based in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan.

Wisconsin is rightfully famous for our dairy industry, but did you know that 46% of our state is forest land. According the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the forest industry in Wisconsin employs 59,000 people, and generates nearly 23 Billion dollars to our economy.

We are here today to ask for your help. Our cost for transportation has increased dramatically. The good people and industry of Wisconsin used to have, and used to rely on a very good railroad system. Unfortunately, that rail system is mostly not supported anymore and that forces more of the supplies we need and products we make, to be shipped on the roads.

The help we need from you in Senate Bill #484, is really a great idea for Wisconsin. This bill will lower the per tire weight the trucks on our roads carry, but at the same time make the trucks more efficient.

This legislation requires more axles on our trucks. Up to 40 tires per truck, which reduces the weight per tire they carry. This large number of tires reduces the impacts on our roads. It allows more total weight, which decreases the amount of greenhouse gases per pound hauled. A great idea for the environment. It will also reduce the number of trucks on the road.

Can we have your help to pass Senate Bill # 484? It would reduce the amount of greenhouse gases, increase the efficiency our trucking industry, help replace the poor and inadequate rail service in our state, and finally help our state continue to produce the beautiful and wonderfully renewable hardwood products our state is famous for,

Thank you for your time,



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Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

Senator Cory Tomczyk-Chair

Hearing Room 411 South

State Capitol Building

Madison WI 53708

Chair Tomczyk and Committee Members,

Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, (GLTPA) its Board of Directors and members fully support Senate Bill 484.

Efficient, productive transportation of raw 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.

To clean up the aftermath and quickly 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 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 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 they also improve safety with less vehicle miles traveled resulting in fewer Green House Gas emissions emitted. With the passage of SB 484 these benefits will be realized to an even greater extent.

The Michigan Border 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 legislation, GLTPA worked 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

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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 included for 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 is seeing a negative economic impact within the forest history. 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 SB 484, is a very 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. Without a healthy forestry industry to manage Wisconsin's forests, it all goes away.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to your consideration and passage of SB 484.

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