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January 12, 2007

Senator Russ Decker
Co-Chairperson, Joint Committee on Finance
Room 122 South, State Capitol

Representative Kitty Rhoades
Co-Chairperson, Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East, State Capitol

Dear Co-Chairpersons Decker and Rhoades:

This letter is a request for additional funding and position authorizations for enforcement of truck weight limit laws in the state. Members of the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Highway Weight Limits have determined, based on extensive testimony and committee discussion, that enforcement of current highway weight limit laws is a critical issue for protection of the public investment in roads and bridges.

The enforcement of truck weight limits is a difficult and time-consuming process for an individual state patrol inspector. Currently, much of the weight limit enforcement effort is focused on interstate highways, yet it is clear from testimony received by the committee that, due in significant part to lack of enforcement, a substantial amount of serious damage is being done to the smaller state trunk highways, local highways, and bridges. Especially in the northern part of the state, there are only one or two state patrol inspectors providing enforcement in multi-county areas.

In order to have a credible enforcement presence and to use the threat of enforcement as an effective way of encouraging voluntary compliance with weight limit laws, the Special Committee believes that the state must hire additional Wisconsin state patrol inspectors. The Special Committee discussed the possibility of the use of additional local enforcement officers for enforcement. However, testimony on this issue was discouraging, because local officers who are trained in truck weight limit enforcement are, during their work shifts, often called upon to perform other assignments and are not available to engage in truck weight limit enforcement on a consistent basis.

The Special Committee acknowledges the difficulties faced by the Joint Committee on Finance in maintaining a positive balance in the transportation fund. However, it is clear to Special Committee members that the investment of transportation fund money in state highways, roads, and bridges must be protected, and that one of the most effective ways of doing this is by vigorous weight limit enforcement by a sufficient number of state patrol inspectors.

This letter was adopted by the members of the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Highway Weight Limits by a vote of Ayes, 12 (Reps. Gottlieb and Friske; Sen. Jauch; and Public Members Cook, Geurts, Hollett, Howells, Johnson, Ottery, Schienebeck, Teasdale, and Vandehey; Noes, 1 (Public Member McQuestion). A list of Special Committee members is enclosed for your information.

Yours truly,

Representative Mark Gottlieb
Chairperson
Special Committee on Highway Weight Limits

MG:jb:wu
Enclosure