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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 642

Assembly Committee on Transportation

November 17, 2021

Members of the committee, thank you for hearing Assembly Bill (AB) 642. This proposal would modify the Michigan border permit for oversized or overweight vehicles to allow for additional routes those vehicles may travel on.

As you know, the timber industry is vital to the Northwoods. However, legislation is needed to ensure that jobs are protected, the supply chain is secure, and Wisconsin remains the logging powerhouse that it is today. Sen. Petrowski and I introduced this legislation at the request of the Great Lakes Timber Producers Association and the Lake States Lumber Association to ensure we provide our loggers with efficient and affordable transportation to get their product from point A to point B.

Not only will sawmills, log trucking companies, and timber purchasers benefit from this proposal, but the inclusion of these routes will also provide additional safety measures. There will be fewer Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), reduced emissions due to the increased fuel efficiency, and cost savings for shippers. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) has even reviewed the proposed routes and determined that there is nothing problematic along them.

With the addition of our amendment, two more routes would be established. The DOT has reviewed these routes as well, and found no issues.

Thank you again for holding today's hearing and allowing me to testify in favor of AB 642. This legislation would greatly benefit the timber industry and workers in Wisconsin, and I look forward to having your support.



TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Transportation

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

DATE: November 17, 2021

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 642

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 over 100 timber related businesses represent 18 states and one Canadian Province.

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.

Stella-Jones has this to say about the benefits of the route extensions:

The added Michigan truck weight routes will be a major assistance to support several characteristics of Wisconsin's infrastructure, transportation obstacles, public safety, and especially jobs. As a state (and nation) we are faced with challenging obstacles that are preventing our jobs and businesses to remain at a sustainable level.

As the nation's largest industrial wood treating company, Stella-Jones is a major contributor to the forest products industry throughout the state and employment base in WI. Our largest treating facility is in Bangor, WI, along with distribution facilities in Superior and Hixton, WI.

Stella-Jones is a major proponent for the added Michigan truck weights to assist the forest products industry in its entirety. The proposed added routes will alleviate some of the struggles our industry has faced, but especially over the last 6-8 months, as noted below.

- Increased truck transportation Costs
 - Short hauls (<100 miles) ~30-50% increases
 - Medium hauls (100-200 miles) ~50-100% increases
 - Long Hauls (200 miles+) ~100-150% increases

- Exponential Increases in:
 - Fuel Costs
 - Insurance Premiums
- Hiring obstacles
- Lack of trucking companies

The additional truck routes will aid to assist the forest products industry as a whole; from raw material purchasers/manufacturers to primary and secondary manufactures across the state and nation.

We thank Rep. Callahan and Sen. Petrowski for their leadership and respectfully urge passage of this important legislation.



Executive Committee:

Matt Jensen President Crandon, WI	Troy Brown WI Vice President Antigo, WI	Mike Sturgill MI Vice President Onaway, MI	Dave Johnson Secretary/Treasurer Quinnesec, MI	Guy Longhini Member at Large Toivola, MI	Mark Huempfer Member at Large Wausaukee, WI	Bruce "Sparky" Enstrom Past President Menominee, MI	Henry Schienebeck Executive Director Rhineland, WI
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DJ Zellar
Germfask, MI

Testimony in Support of 2021 Assembly Bill 642

Chairman, Plumer and Committee Members,

Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, (GLTPA) its board of directors and members fully support Assembly Bill 642.

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 clean up 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

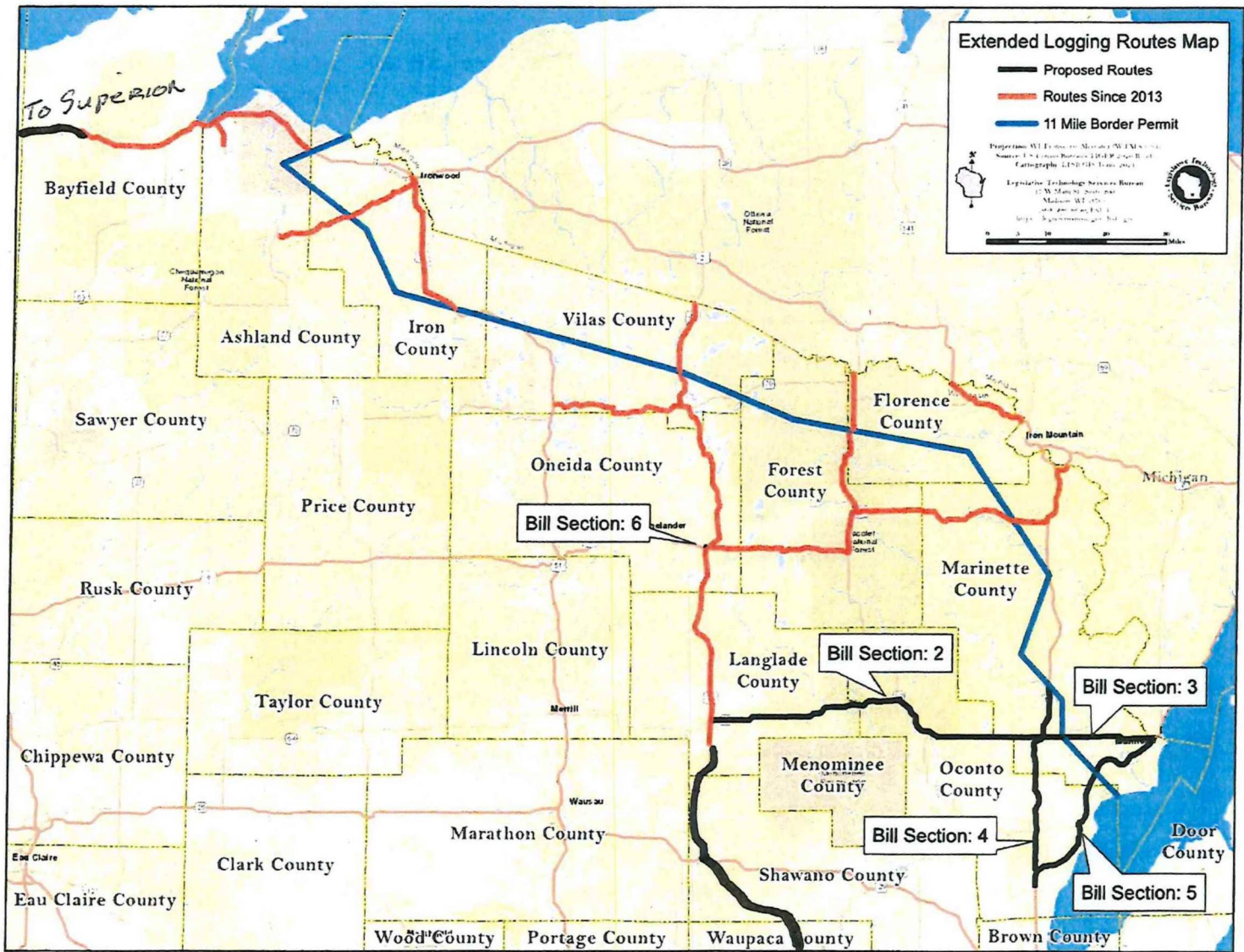


needs. As you can imagine, examining these routes takes time as every culvert, bridge and mile of road must be accounted for to ensure infrastructure investments are not prematurely damaged before planned replacement occurs. Based on current routes approved in years past, it is safe to determine that 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 and lumber 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 Assembly Bill 624

Henry Schienebeck
Executive Director, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association



TO
JUNCTION
OF
Hwy 54



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**Testimony of Scott Lawry, Director of Bureau of Technical Services
Assembly Committee on Transportation Public Hearing
November 17, 2021**

Thank you, Chairman Plumer and committee members for the opportunity to speak for informational purposes on Assembly Bill 642.

GENERAL TESTIMONY

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 76 bridges and 252 miles of pavement for all requested routes (in the original bill and subsequent amendments) 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 when compared to existing allowed truck weights and configurations for a fixed volume of commodity. Not all pavement structures are designed to handle a designation of an oversize/overweight route, regardless of truck configuration. 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. Roads with a lower initial structural design will see an increase in the rate of deterioration.

These impacts assume that allowing heavier loads will require fewer trucks to haul the same amount. The department also notes heavier truck traffic will cause bridge decks

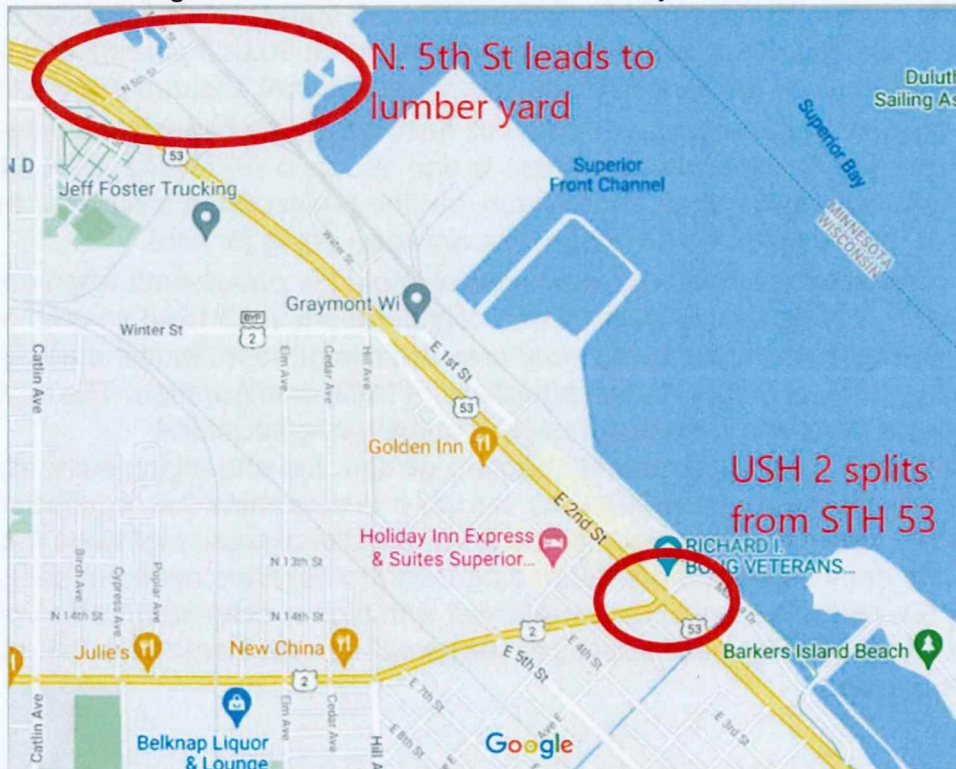
and pavements to deteriorate at an accelerated rate. Unfortunately, the department cannot quantify the exact impacts given the variety of parameters that contribute to deterioration.

AMENDMENT TESTIMONY

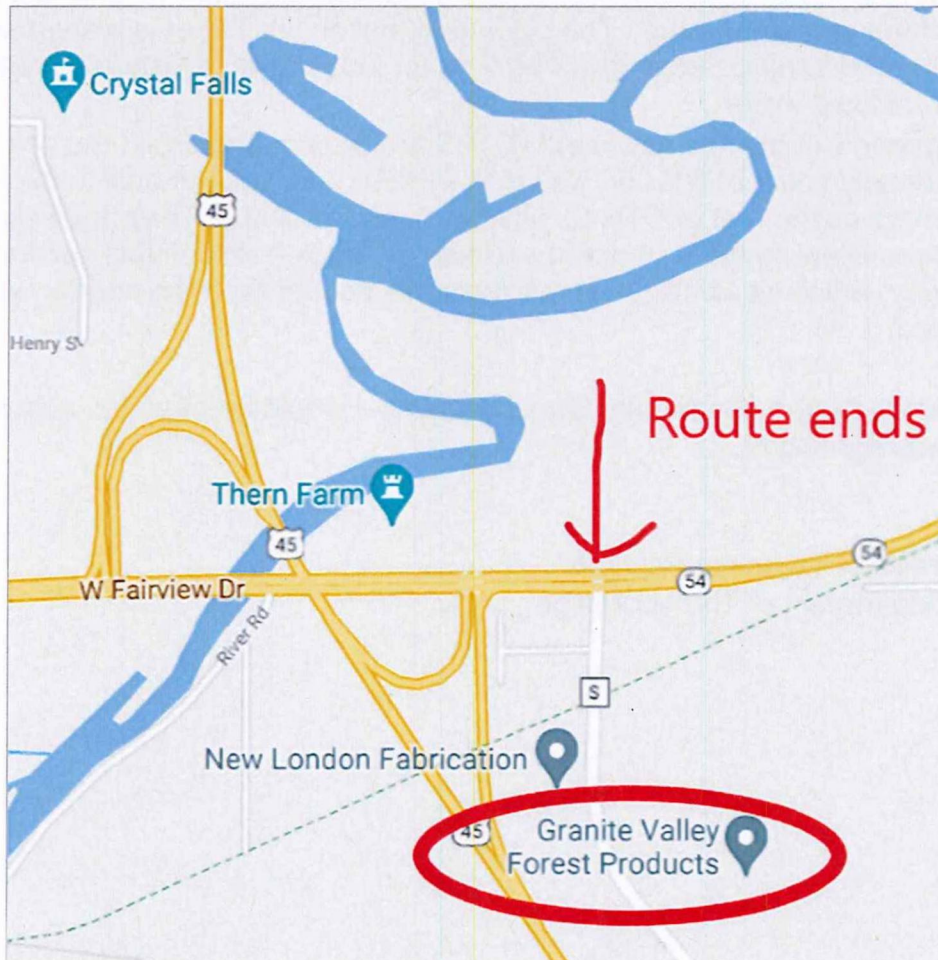
There are two sections of USH 45 that have lower ratings on the Pavement Condition Index: South of Clintonville, 3500 feet in length; South of Antigo, 1 mile in length. No current projects are planned for these sections. The department expects these sections to deteriorate at a faster rate than the rest of the highway, based on the current conditions. Overall, the department does not have major pavement or structure concerns regarding the extension of two current routes included in the amendment. All state routes should have adequate capacity to carry the Michigan-configured trucks.

However, the department believes the routes included in the amendment are incomplete as drafted:

- **Section 1g:** extends the current route on USH 2 into Douglas County to N. 5th Street.
 - However, USH 2 runs concurrently with USH 53 near Amnicon Falls, WI, and then splits apart from USH 53 just short of N. 5th Street, so the route should be modified to correctly identify the highway traversed (USH 53) to provide access to N. 5th Street.
 - Additionally, N. 5th Street should be included as a local segment for the truck to get to its destination at the lumber yard.



- **Section 6m:** extends the route from STH 54 to CTH S in Outagamie County. However, the department believes the truck destination is located on CTH S, so the route should include that local segment as well.



Finally, the department does not have authority to require local authorities to issue OSOW permits. Therefore, the department requested the City of Superior and Outagamie County to review the local segments that should be included for the routes:

- City of Superior is agreeable to including the local segment of N. 5th Street as part of the permitted route. The city noted that N. 5th Street is a short segment, and that the turning radius might be tight for longer trucks, especially with a bunch of fixed axles.
- Outagamie County has assessed CTH S and is concerned that the segment immediately south of STH 54 was built in 1993 and was not built to the same standards as the rest of CTH S, which was built in 2004. They have significant concerns allowing more frequent and heavier truck traffic on this section of roadway, which would require improvements sooner than the county has planned.

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

Scott Lawry
Director, Bureau of Technical Services
Wisconsin Department of Transportation