

Position

International Paper supports legislation, such as H.R. 1799, to allow states to increase the weight limit on trucks traveling on interstate highways from 80,000 to 97,000 pounds, as long as the combined tractor-trailer is fitted with an additional axle and new brakes. Such a policy could reduce accidents, fuel use, vehicle miles traveled, CO₂ emissions and road wear, while reducing IP's trucking costs by 15-20%.

Issue Background

Current federal law sets an 80,000 pound weight limit on our nation's interstate highways (with certain exceptions). Numerous studies and the examples of other nations have demonstrated that if you equip a single-trailer vehicle with an additional 6th axle and brakes, you can improve both highway safety and trucking industry productivity. Updating federal law to allow for the use of these more efficient trucks would enable companies to move the same amount of freight with fewer trucks, saving fuel, road wear and overall transportation costs.

Before the current economic slowdown last summer, IP sent almost 600 trucks per week from our mill in Courtland, Alabama to delivery points throughout the southeast. While the trucks were filled to the 80,000 lb. weight limit, each still had space available for additional freight. If the weight limit was increased to 97,000 lbs. after adding an additional axle and four tires, we could reduce the number of truckloads needed each week from 600 to 450. Here is why this is critically important: 150 fewer trucks on the road driving the average 628 mile routes results in a reduction of 94,200 vehicle miles traveled each week. This could reduce weekly fuel use by more than 13,000 gallons, and reduce CO₂ emissions each week by 300,000 lbs. Since each truck weighs about 35,000 pounds before any cargo is added, removing 150 trucks per week will take more than 5,250,000 lbs. per week off the roads and bridges of the southeast. And that would be the experience of only one of IP's 23 US paper mills.

In a report issued in January of 2009, the State of Wisconsin found that had this proposal been enacted in 2006, it would have resulted in 90 fewer heavy truck related accidents in Wisconsin. When the United Kingdom implemented this identical proposal in 2001 and then studied it in 2006, their report found that the tons of goods shipped had increased, while the fatalities from heavy truck related accidents declined. The Transportation Research Board's *Special Report 267*, as requested by Congress, highlights the benefits that higher weight on six-axle single-trailers will provide to our transportation system.

Current U.S. interstate truck weight laws are more than 20 years old and hinder the ability of our nation's motor carriers to safely and efficiently move products around our road system. In the last 20 years there have been significant improvements in technology and truck design, making a fresh look at increasing truck weight limits long overdue.

Current Legislation

Reps. Mike Michaud (D-Maine) and Jean Schmidt (R-Ohio) introduced HR 1799 in March of 2009. We are working through the Coalition for Transportation Productivity to secure cosponsors.

About International Paper

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