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Truck Weight Reform Legislation

Position

International Paper supports inclusion of the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act (SETA) into the upcoming Highway Reauthorization Bill. SETA allows each state to increase its interstate weight limit from 80,000 to 97,000 lbs. for tractor-trailers fitted with an additional axle and brakes. SETA would allow companies – safely and more efficiently ship their products using fewer truck loads, while reducing accidents, fuel use, congestion, vehicle miles traveled, CO2 emissions and road wear. SETA could reduce IP's trucking costs by 15-20%.

Issue Background

Current U.S. interstate truck weight laws are nearly 30 years old and hinder the ability of our nation's motor carriers to safely and efficiently move products across the U.S. interstate system. Since the current weight limit was set, there have been significant improvements in technology and truck design – making a fresh look at increasing truck weight limits long overdue. SETA gives each state the option to set interstate weight limits of up to 97,000 pounds, but only for trucks equipped with six axles instead of the typical five. The additional axle maintains braking and weight-per-tire specifications so trucks can safely carry more freight. Taxpayers would bear no cost for this legislation. In fact, SETA includes a user fee for six-axle vehicles choosing to carry the additional weight and revenues would be used for bridge maintenance. Allowing the use of these more efficient trucks would enable companies to move the same amount of freight with fewer trucks, benefitting the environment, reducing road wear and significantly decreasing overall transportation costs.

Impact to International Paper

Across the U.S.:

If SETA were implemented in every state, IP would see the following annual results:

- A productivity gain per truck of 27%
- A reduction of 33 million IP vehicle miles traveled
- Ability to carry the same amount of tonnage on 68,000 fewer truckloads
 - Resulting on average in 1,300 fewer trucks on the road per week
- Savings of more than 6.5 million gallons of diesel fuel
- Savings in truck shipping costs of 15-20%

At our 20 Paper and Packaging Mills:

IP sends almost 600 trucks per week from our Courtland, Alabama paper mill to delivery points throughout the southeast. While the trucks are filled to the 80,000 lb. weight limit, each still has space for additional freight. With implementation of SETA, IP could reduce the number of truckloads needed at Courtland each week by 150 (from 600 to 450), resulting in these weekly results:

- A reduction of 94,200 vehicle miles traveled
- A decline in IP's fuel use by more than 13,000 gallons
- A reduction in CO2 emissions by 300,000 lbs.
- A weight reduction of 5,250,000 lbs. off the roads and bridges in the southeast

Policy Request

In the House, please cosponsor H.R. 763 sponsored by Reps. Schmidt (R-Ohio) and Michaud (D-Maine).

In the Senate, please cosponsor S. 747 by Sens. Crapo (R-Idaho), Kohl (D-Wisc.), Collins (R-Maine) and Portman (R-Ohio). We are seeking SETA's inclusion into the Highway Reauthorization Bill.