

Michaud and Colleagues Examine Maine Truck Weight Issue at House Hearing

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WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, joined fellow Highways and Transit Subcommittee members in holding a hearing on truck weight and length. Maine Department of Transportation Commissioner David Cole testified before the subcommittee on behalf of the State of Maine's request to exempt the remainder of its Interstate System from federal truck weights so that it is consistent with state weight limits. Among other things, this change would help move trucks off the state's secondary roads and onto the Interstate System.

"The trucking industry is reeling from the high costs of diesel," said Michaud. "Maine truckers and small businesses are shutting down because of these high costs. While there are a number of things that we could do to help, one that wouldn't cost anything, but that could help a lot, is instituting an equitable truck weight policy."

"Today's hearing was a very important step forward. As we approach the next multi-year transportation bill, it was crucial that the committee heard directly from the state on its truck weight exemption request. I firmly believe that Commissioner Cole's testimony today educated Members of Congress and their staffs about Maine's unique situation," Michaud stated.

During his testimony, Commissioner Cole highlighted the important benefits of a truck weight exemption for the remainder of Maine's Interstate: 1) it will allow industries in Maine to be more competitive; 2) it will save on fuel, which is important given high diesel prices; 3) it will help reduce pollution because it will reduce truck miles traveled; 4) and most importantly, it will promote safety for Mainers. The current mismatch in truck weights means that heavier loads are diverted to secondary roads through many towns in their travels up and down the state. However, if the exemption were granted, trucks could be driving on a rural Interstate system, away from town centers and communities. Michaud has sponsored a bill to accomplish this and is actively working with committee members to come up with a way to move forward.

"A federal truck weight exemption for the remainder of Maine's Interstate system will significantly improve overall roadway safety and the economic competitiveness of Maine's businesses, while reducing fuel and infrastructure costs and environmental impacts," said Cole. "It is a no-cost opportunity that benefits not only the state of Maine, but also the northeastern U.S. and eastern Canada."

At the hearing, Michaud and Cole referenced a Maine DOT map that they displayed during the hearing on the committee's video screens. The Maine DOT map is attached.

"When we showed the committee members that map, you could see the light bulbs go off," said Michaud. "The problem with this issue is that people do not understand Maine's particular situation. Once they do, they get it. This hearing was very positive for the issue and I hope that it helps pave the way for a potential solution to our truck weight issue in Maine."

Currently, most of Maine's Interstate highways are subject to the federally mandated truck weight limit of 80,000 pounds. However, Maine's state limit is 100,000 pounds - and it would be difficult to lower it due to the demands of Maine's major industries, especially forest products, and the through traffic from the surrounding states and Canadian provinces which all have 100,000 pound limits on all of their roads. The hearing today marks the third time this year that Michaud has questioned witnesses before the committee about truck weights.