

Michaud and Piotti Push Maine Truck Weight Issue at Regional Transportation Summit

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"I have been working on the truck weight issue for years now and I am pleased that transportation leaders from around New England got the chance to hear more about the importance of this change and what it would mean for road safety and Maine's economy," said Michaud. "Changing federal truck weight limits on Maine's Interstate would also directly help our forest products industry survive, especially at a time when they are facing record high diesel prices."

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.

"Unfortunately, as a result of the mismatch between these two sets of regulations, heavier trucks must divert off the Interstate highways in Maine onto state roads that pass through a number of our communities, including ones I represent," said Piotti. "This has negative impacts on safety, the economy, and the cost to the system."

"An exemption from the federal weight regulation for the remainder of Maine's Interstate would be tremendously beneficial," said Michaud. "This change is supported by every municipality in Maine, chambers of commerce, and the entire Maine congressional delegation."

An in-depth study completed by the State of Maine demonstrated that not only would such an exemption decrease crashes and save lives, but it would also save money and improve road conditions.

"If we want to improve safety, decrease travel time, speed commerce, increase trade among our states, and make our system more efficient, we must consider this issue as part of any discussion of the future of our highway system, and meeting the coming capacity crunch," Piotti added.

Michaud, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, is working in Congress with the Maine congressional delegation to pass a provision that would exempt all portions of the Interstate Highway System in Maine from federal weight limits.