

# **PFA Policy Statement**

## **THE NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING IN PENNSYLVANIA**

### **Pennsylvania Forestry Association Position:**

PFA supports the need for comprehensive transportation funding. It is critical for all forest landowners, private and government, to have adequate and safe access to the forest resources of this state. Adequate and safe access is necessary to achieve sustainable forest management; improve forest health, wildlife habitat, and watershed health; and to promote sound economic development in our rural communities through wood utilization and recreational use of forest lands.

### **Background:**

Rural road and bridge infrastructure is essential to the safe and efficient movement of logs to mills and forest products to consumers. But Pennsylvania's rural road and bridge infrastructure is crumbling and PA has the highest number of deficient bridges in the nation (4,400). More than 9,000 miles of State Routes are in poor condition. Rural municipal road infrastructure is in similar poor condition.

This is because the primary sources of road and bridge funding (fuel taxes and motor license and registration fees) have not been revised in decades and currently do not produce enough revenue to support our road and bridge system. Pennsylvania's transportation funding gap is estimated to be as much as \$3.5 billion annually.

In August, PennDOT announced that it would place new weight restrictions on some 1,000 structurally deficient bridges across the state in an effort to extend their usage life. PennDOT also continues to post weight restrictions on more state routes, including many of the rural state routes that are essential to moving timber to mills.

### **Impact on Forest Owners:**

This situation has a direct impact on forest owners and the value of their timber, as these new and excessive transportation costs are deducted from timber bids or purchase offers. In some cases, purchasers are placing no value on pulpwood because the cost or financial risk to move this material to market is too great. An increasing number of mills and loggers are now avoiding purchasing timber in certain areas because the increased transportation costs simply exceed the value of the forest products being harvested.

### **Comprehensive Transportation Funding Plan:**

Crumbling transportation infrastructure (roads, bridges, ports, mass transit systems) is an issue across the state. A large coalition of business groups, organized labor groups and local governments groups across the state support a Comprehensive Transportation Funding Plan. The Pennsylvania Forest Products Association, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, and Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry are among the 150 statewide and regional groups supporting this transportation funding plan. The primary source of new funding for roads and bridges would come from gradual phase-out of an antiquated cap on the wholesale Oil Company Franchise Tax. This phase-out will likely result in a modest increase in fuel prices over a number of years. It may also be necessary to increase certain license and vehicle registration fees to account for past inflation.

### **The Cost of Doing Nothing:**

- A do-nothing approach will result PennDOT being forced to post many additional bridges and miles of State Routes under weight restrictions.
- Forest product haulers will be subject to the increased costs of operating on more posted roads.
- PennDOT will increasingly require forest product companies and other haulers to bear greater financial responsibility for its 'normal' upkeep through the state's road bonding program.
- These increased transportation costs will have a negative impact on timber values. Some PA forest owners will find it increasingly difficult to market their timber and pulpwood due to these reduced road and bridge weight restrictions.



Dear Honorable Member of the Pennsylvania Legislature:

The Pennsylvania Forestry Association is the nation's oldest grass roots state organization devoted to forest conservation. Our Mission is to promote forest stewardship to ensure forest sustainability to benefit all Pennsylvanians, now and into the future.

It is critical for all forest landowners to have adequate and safe access to the forest resources of this state. Adequate and safe access is necessary to achieve sustainable forest management; improve forest health, wildlife habitat, and watershed health; and to promote sound economic development in our rural communities through wood utilization and recreational use of forest lands.

Pennsylvania's forest owners will find it increasingly difficult to market their timber and pulpwood due to reduced road and bridge weight restrictions. Increased transportation costs resulting from reduced bridge and road weight limits will have a severe negative impact on our timber values.

A full copy of our "The Need for Comprehensive Transportation Funding in Pennsylvania" Policy Statement is enclosed.

PFA supports the need for comprehensive transportation funding and urges you to quickly pass a comprehensive Transportation Funding Bill.

Sincerely,

*Robb Piper*

PFA President

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