



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

Testimony on Assembly Bill 41 (SB 31)

Senator Jerry Petrowski and Representative Keith Ripp

January 28, 2014

I want to thank committee members for allowing us to present testimony today in favor of Assembly Bill 41.

Last session, in cooperation with the Department of Transportation (DOT), we passed several bills to improve the efficiency of Wisconsin's freight transportation system. Among these were bills that would allow the transport of heavier loads of certain goods on Wisconsin's roadways by semi-trucks with a six axle configuration. These bills, based on the Wisconsin Truck Size and Weight Study, will deliver numerous benefits to users, consumers, and taxpayers. By spreading the weight over the additional axle, the trucks can operate at a higher gross weight without doing additional damage to the road surface, while providing increased efficiency for shippers and consumers. In short, they deliver the same volume of goods faster, using less fuel, and in fewer trips, reducing the number of trucks on the road.

This bill is an additional step to help our local industries take full advantage of these efficiencies. While the truck weight study indicated the roads would not be negatively impacted by these larger loads thanks to the additional axle, we have bridges throughout the state which are not rated to carry these heavier loads and, in some cases, cannot carry even standard 80,000 pound semis. Some of the bridges were built prior to current engineering standards, and some are simply in need of repair.

Local governments post these bridges for their applicable weight limits, and any truck carrying a load exceeding that limit must use an alternative route. This can result in trucks having to travel an additional ten, twenty, even thirty miles per trip, negating the efficiencies achieved by carrying the additional weight.

There are over 650 local bridges around the state that are currently posted for weight. In many cases, these bridges may be lightly traveled or in an area that does not impact heavy freight. However, in some areas of the state, especially those that are rural, these sub-par bridges can be a serious impediment to commerce.

This bill creates a competitive local freight bridge improvement program within the Department of Transportation to help local governments upgrade or replace these bridges. Local governments would work with local industries to identify bridges on high-

priority routes that are an impediment to their transportation operations. They would then file applications with DOT for assistance in upgrading bridges. DOT would provide reimbursement of up to 90% of eligible costs based on several criteria, including the amount of heavy freight traffic likely to use a route if the bridge were upgraded and the availability of alternative routes.

We would also like to mention an amendment that we will be bringing forward and that was attached to the bill during the Senate committee executive session. The amendment would create a sunset date of December 31, 2017 for the program and changes the time-period to January, 1, 2015 through December 31, 2017.

At the end of the day this is a jobs bill. Not jobs building bridges but companies building capacity or new facilities in places in Wisconsin where the jobs are really needed.

Transportation costs are built into everything that is bought or sold. It is part of every company's bottom line. For companies that deal in things like heavy manufacturing, agriculture, or forest products it is a big part of their bottom line. If they can save six to twelve percent on transportation costs by hauling more product in each load, that adds up. If the fuel bill for a tractor trailer is \$70,000 per year and you have ten trucks, saving eight percent nets you \$56,000. That could be the difference between hiring and not; between sinking and swimming in today's challenging economy.

Thank you again for your attention to this issue. We would be happy to answer any questions.



State of Wisconsin
2013 - 2014 LEGISLATURE



LRBa1511/1
ARG:jld:rs

ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 1,
TO ASSEMBLY BILL 41

January 23, 2014 - Offered by Representative RIPP.

1 At the locations indicated, amend the bill as follows:

2 **1.** Page 2, line 11: after "84.182." insert "No moneys may be encumbered from
3 this appropriation account after December 31, 2017."

4 **2.** Page 6, line 17: after that line insert:

5 **"(6) PROGRAM TERMINATION.** This section does not apply after December 31,
6 2017. Any rule promulgated under sub. (4) (b) or (5) (a) does not apply after this
7 date."

8 **3.** Page 6, line 22: delete the material beginning with "the first" and ending
9 with "subsection" on line 23 and substitute "December 31, 2014".

10 **4.** Page 8, line 11: delete the material beginning with "the first" and ending
11 with "later," on line 13 and substitute "January 1, 2015,".

12

(END)



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Transportation

FROM: Daniel Bahr, Government Affairs Associate *D-B*

DATE: January 28, 2014

SUBJECT: Support for Assembly Bill 41

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) supports Assembly Bill 41, creating a competitive local freight bridge improvement program within the Department of Transportation. The program would assist local units of government in upgrading or replacing identified bridges along priority routes in need of repair.

While adding additional axels can reduce the impact of heavy weights on local roads, many bridges throughout the state remain impacted to a maximum degree. Certain bridges have been built prior to current engineering standards and cannot carry the standard 80,000-pound semis. Addressing the need to repair such bridges is a priority for counties and local units of government all across the state.

Under this proposal, units of government such as counties would work with industries at the local level to identify bridges along high priority routes in need of repair. The local unit of government would have the opportunity to file applications with the DOT for financial assistance in upgrading identified bridges. DOT would provide reimbursement of up to 90% of eligible costs based on several criteria including weight, traffic frequency, availability of alternative routes, and the amount of heavy freight traffic likely to use a priority route should the bridge be upgraded.

AB 41 is an important step towards improving transportation at the local level. The bill addresses a key public safety concern, while also ensuring that businesses have the necessary routes at the local level to get products to market and employees to work.

WCA respectfully requests that the Committee support Assembly Bill 41.

Please feel free to contact WCA if you need additional information.