



## **HEAVY LOADS / PROTECTING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT**

A number of factors affect the life of our highways and bridges. The most significant factor is the number of heavy loads our highways and bridges are subjected to. The life span of a highway or bridge may be significantly shortened by loads that exceed certain design parameters. In some cases, immediate damage may occur as a result of excessive loads.

Wisconsin Local governments maintain over 100,000 miles of roads, streets and highways. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in our local transportation network and hundreds of millions are spent annually to maintain it. In recent years, construction and maintenance costs have increased well above standard inflation, due to the large amounts of fuel and oil used on transportation facilities. At the same time as a local government's ability to maintain their infrastructure becomes more strained and the need to preserve the existing roads over a longer service life is becoming necessary, a number of industries are using economic justification to lobby for exceptions and exemptions to Wisconsin weight laws. Such allowances can lead to accelerated deterioration and damage to the system. Public policy must balance the need for improved economic vitality with the preservation of our infrastructure. There must be clear economic benefit to any change or accommodation offered to industry.

### **Position Statement:**

- Any consideration of increased weight loadings for Wisconsin highways should include an assessment of the potential damage that will result to local bridges and pavements.
- It is incumbent on state government to partner with local government to insure that any legislative action does not jeopardize local governments' ability to protect the local road system. The ability of local governments to post their roads and bridges is both a fiscal and safety issue.
- Any increased weight permitted should try to include a vehicle or equipment configurations that would do "no harm". Additional axles or specially configured equipment, that will spread loading and limit damage, should be part of any legislation that includes higher weights.
- Consideration of local highway limitations and cost to local government should be part of the analysis performed when non-standard weights are being considered.
- A "priority route" analysis for local roads, streets and highways should be undertaken with the establishment of a program that targets resources for each identified "priority" local heavy haul route.
- Policy signed in to law in 2013 regulating implements of husbandry (2013 Wisconsin Act 377) is a good start towards addressing many of these aforementioned issues. The 2013 law is a product of nearly two years of research, discussion and compromise.

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