

# WEBINAR

April 30, 2020 at 2:00 PM EST

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## Safety and Efficiency of State-Legal Log Trucks on Interstate Highways in Eight Wood Baskets in the US South

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### FRA Webinar Agenda April 30, 2020 at 2:00 PM EST

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**2:00 PM:** Opening Remarks– FRA, Deb Hawkinson, President. GFA, Andres Villegas, President & CEO

**2:05 PM:** Federal Public Policy Opportunities, FRA Tim O’Hara, Director of Government Affairs

**2:15 PM:** Safety and Efficiency of State-Legal Log Trucks on Interstate Highways in Eight Wood Baskets in the US South – Dr. Joe Conrad, University of Georgia

**3:00 PM:** Questions and Discussion

**3:15 PM:** Closing Remarks – FRA, Deb Hawkinson

**Abstract:** The U.S. South harvests millions of tons of timber annually, nearly all of which is transported by log trucks. Most southern states limit gross vehicle weight (GVW) of log trucks to 80,000 lbs., plus a state-specific tolerance of 5–10%. These tolerances are generally not valid on interstate highways. Consequently, most loaded log trucks avoid interstate highways, meaning they must travel through downtowns, school zones, intersections, and other areas with elevated accident risk. Recent research, sponsored by the Georgia Forestry Foundation and Forest Resources Association and conducted by Dr. Joe Conrad of the University of Georgia, estimated the benefits of allowing state-legal, loaded log trucks to operate on interstate highways. The study completed a literature review to assess the relationship between truck weight and transportation safety. In addition, more than 900 routes from over 250 harvest sites were analyzed to compare the safety and efficiency of current hauling routes to routes utilizing interstate highways in eight wood baskets (Augusta, Brunswick, Macon, and Brunswick, GA; Brewton and Prattville, AL; Eastover, SC; and Roanoke Rapids, NC). The percent of routes benefitting from interstate highway access ranged from 24% in the Brunswick, GA wood basket to 58% in the Augusta, GA wood basket. Where interstate access was advantageous, travel time savings were observed in six of the eight wood baskets analyzed. Interstate routes were safer than current routes with fewer intersections, stop signs and stop lights, cities and towns, and school zones. Interstate routes generally had lower travel costs, fuel consumption, and pavement damage than current routes. This research suggests that allowing state-legal, loaded log trucks to operate on interstate highways would improve the safety and efficiency of timber transportation in the US South.

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