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Senate Bill 581 (as enrolled)  
Sponsor: Senator Don Koivisto  
Committee: Transportation and Tourism

Date Completed: 2-1-00

### **RATIONALE**

When trees measuring up to eight inches in diameter are harvested from Michigan's forests, they generally are cut into logs measuring 100 inches in length, as specified by the mills that receive the logs, and moved to decks located near logging operations. The logs, commonly termed pulpwood, then are stacked in piles until they are loaded lengthwise onto truck beds, secured with chains, and transported to the mills for processing. Trailers often are attached at the end of many logging trucks where additional logs are cross-hauled, or are stacked by width and then bound by chains. During the winter, snow and ice often form on logs that are stacked on decks waiting for transport to the mills. While the product is being transported, the snow and ice may melt or fall off because of vibrations that occur during the trips. Consequently, the potential exists for chains to loosen and logs to slip out off of a trailer, which creates a safety hazard on highways.

In order to haul logs more safely, timber industry representatives have suggested that the sides of log-hauling trucks have stakes or racks installed so that the logs can be stacked and secured lengthwise on a trailer, as well as on the truck bed. Installing the safety equipment on logging trucks would require a trailer's width to be nine feet, whether or not it was carrying a load of logs. Under the Michigan Vehicle Code and U.S. Department of Transportation regulations, the outside width of a truck loaded with unprocessed logs or pulpwood may be nine feet, but the maximum width of these vehicles when not carrying a load may not be more than eight and one-half feet. Some people believe that the width of these trucks should be nine feet, regardless of whether the truck is loaded or empty, to accommodate devices that enclose a logging truck's payload.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to permit a truck and trailer or a tractor and semitrailer combination hauling pulpwood or unprocessed logs to be operated with a maximum width of up to 108

inches in accordance with a special use permit issued under the Code.

Currently, the total width of a vehicle or the load on a vehicle may not exceed 96 inches, except that the total outside width of the load of a vehicle hauling concrete pipe, agricultural products, or unprocessed logs, pulpwood, or wood bolts may not exceed 108 inches. If a vehicle equipped with pneumatic tires is operated on a highway, the maximum width from the outside of one wheel and tire to the outside of the opposite wheel and tire may not exceed 102 inches, and the outside width of the body of the vehicle or the load on it may not exceed 96 inches. The bill would create an exception to these provisions, as described above.

MCL 257.717

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

#### **Supporting Argument**

The bill would provide an exception to current requirements by allowing a special use permit to be issued so log-hauling trucks could increase the width of their trailers, whether they were loaded or unloaded. In order for the U.S. Department of Transportation to approve the increased width under Federal regulations, Michigan is required to provide for the exception in the Vehicle Code. Operators then could equip the truck beds with stakes or racks to enclose the payloads. Consequently, roadways used by logging operations would be safer because the logs would stay more firmly in place while they were being transported from lumbering sites to processing mills. Reportedly, in an auto accident two years ago in the Upper Peninsula, a mother and her son were killed because a log bounced off a truck and into the path of an oncoming vehicle, when a tire on the dolly connecting a trailer to a log truck went flat. The chains binding the logs apparently had loosened and the log slipped out of the load and into traffic. The bill would help deter this sort of accident.

Legislative Analyst: L. Arasim

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The fiscal impact of this bill cannot be determined.

Assuming that vehicles hauling pulpwood or unprocessed logs would not also be subject to additional overweight or overload restrictions, the special highway use permits would cost approximately \$15 for a single trip and \$30 for multiple trips or on an annual basis, payable to the State Transportation Department, for all trips on the State trunkline system. These permit fees would be deposited in the State Trunkline Fund for use by the Department of Transportation.

The oversized vehicle permit fee charged by local units of government for trips on roads under local jurisdiction may not exceed the administrative costs incurred by that jurisdictional authority issuing the permit. Additional fees would be paid to the State and/or local units of government if oversized vehicles also were subject to overweight or overload restrictions.

Fiscal Analyst: B. Bowerman

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.