**Description**

House File 2536 amends Iowa Code section 321.463 to allow vehicles transporting certain agricultural commodities to exceed the current maximum gross weight limits on noninterstate highways.

Agricultural commodities that may be transported in excess of the current maximum gross weight limits under the Bill include corn, soybeans, hay, straw, silage, stover, manure, or agricultural chemicals, which are defined in Iowa Code section 570A.1. Agricultural commodities would be allowed to exceed the current legal maximum gross weight by up to 12.5%, with a total limit of 90,000 pounds. The vehicle or combination of vehicles transporting the agricultural commodities must still comply with all of the posted weight limits on highways and bridges.

A fine shall be issued to a vehicle or combination of vehicles under the Bill that exceed the 12.5% maximum gross weight tolerance, and shall be computed based on the difference between the vehicle’s actual weight and the 12.5% tolerance weight allowed. Vehicles that are currently authorized to have a maximum gross weight of 90,000 pounds or more will not be subject to the fine.

**Background**

Under current law, a vehicle’s maximum gross weight is based on the number of axles and the distance between the axles on the vehicle. The department of Transportation (DOT) and local authorities may issue permits that allow a vehicle to exceed the current maximum allowable gross weights.

In addition to the permits that are currently available, governors typically include directives in proclamations issued during the harvest season that allow agricultural commodities to be transported in excess of maximum weight limits. House File 2536 expands the temporary directives that have been commonly included in proclamations from governors in the past by making the application for permits permanent under Iowa Code section 29C.6. The Bill also adds manure and agricultural chemicals to the list of agricultural commodities that are considered acceptable goods to be transported in excess of the gross weight limit.

**Assumptions**

- There will not be a loss in revenue from divisible loads with a gross weight of 90,000 pounds. These loads do not currently qualify for permits, and do not pay fees for a permit under the Governor’s Harvest Proclamation.
- The DOT expects an increase in damage to infrastructure caused by additional trucks with heavier gross weights. The maintenance costs of this damage are unknown.
- Road deterioration is anticipated to increase in the spring, due to excessive moisture and rain. Under the Harvest Proclamation, the trucks traveling at higher weights do not travel in spring weather conditions.
The travel of vehicles with a higher maximum gross weight under the Bill will be authorized on county and city roads, which is estimated to increase costs to the counties and cities that maintain the roads and the bridges located on the roads under the counties’ or cities’ local authority.

There are 4,184 Iowa DOT-owned bridges that would be reevaluated for the new weight loads under the Bill at a cost of $750 each, in compliance with federal law.

There are 19,649 county-and city-owned bridges that would be reevaluated for the new weight loads under the Bill at a cost of $500 each. 18,440 of the bridges belong to counties, and 1,209 belong to cities.

**Fiscal Impact**

House File 2536 is expected to increase expenses paid by the Primary Road Fund (PRF) by a one-time cost of $3.1 million to reevaluate the Iowa DOT-owned bridges, which would be federally required to be analyzed. Counties and cities are also expected to accrue a one-time cost of $9.8 million in order to complete the federally required bridge analysis of the bridges that belong to cities and counties. The Bill is anticipated to have an unknown impact on funds in the Road Use Tax Fund (RUTF) because of maintenance costs due to increased damage and deterioration.

**Sources**

Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division
Construction and Materials Bureau
Bridges and Structures Bureau
Local Systems Bureau

/s/ Holly M. Lyons
March 7, 2022

The fiscal note for this Bill was prepared pursuant to Joint Rule 17 and the Iowa Code. Data used in developing this fiscal note is available from the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency upon request.