



**Michigan
Agri-Business
Association**

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**Sen. Mike Green, MABA address logistics
challenges at Bay City transportation forum**
*Trucks, rail infrastructure, water transportation are
focus areas for latest agriculture logistics forum*

BAY CITY – Continuing a long-running discussion on the logistics improvements needed to move Michigan-produced agricultural products, **Senate Agriculture Appropriations Chairman Mike Green** joined **the Michigan Agri-Business Association (MABA)** to lead a forum on transportation today in Bay City – the fourth major logistics forum hosted in three years by **MABA** and **Sen. Green**.

“I know that no matter how productive and innovative our farmers and agribusinesses are, if the crops can’t move, those crops lose value,” said **Sen. Green**. “We continue to face serious logistical questions across the state. Higher rail rates are costing farmers money at their local grain handler, and slow service costs elevators money when they ship grain. Truck and vessel transportation options also face a great deal of regulatory uncertainty. I’m committed to identifying policies, regulations and initiatives that can help improve Michigan’s transportation infrastructure.”

“With today’s technology, even a difficult year for farmers results in hundreds of millions of bushels of Michigan-grown grain that has to move through the production process and on to global markets, and our Association’s ongoing logistics focus reflects the tremendous role transportation plays in our industry,” said **Jim Byrum**, president of **MABA**. “As a peninsula, Michigan has special transportation issues, and as a state we need to recognize those issues and help our businesses make sure they have reliable, available and affordable transportation.”

The need to transport an increasing amount of Michigan-grown commodities was a key focus for the forum. In 1970 Michigan produced approximately 178 million bushels of corn, wheat and soybeans – and in 2015, the state nearly reached half a billion bushels.

Agriculture leaders noted the current deficiency in road and rail infrastructure, and regulatory uncertainty, plaguing many across Michigan.

“There is a real question about the future of rail transport – with reliability problems, equipment failures and breakdowns in service made worse by a lack of coordination between shortline railroads and Class I railroads, causing us major headaches,” said **Chuck Squires**, government relations manager at **Cooperative Elevator Co.** “We need to work together, establishing new partnerships between government at all levels and the private sector, along with shortline and Class I carriers. We must make an investment in adequate rail infrastructure, done alongside strong federal oversight over Class I carriers.”

Brian Brink, president of **Brink Farms**, said an uncertain regulatory landscape and driver shortages due to retiring baby boomers and a lack of young drivers entering the industry, add to the trouble trucking companies experience with rural roads.

“It isn’t just a problem of failing roads and bridges. We’re having a tough time finding and keeping experienced drivers, and regulations that impose extreme hours of service limits, and restrict younger drivers’ ability to handle certain routes has put pressure on the labor force,” **Brink** said.

Brink also reiterated the importance of Michigan's unique truck weight regulations, allowing 11-axle trucks with up to 160,000 pounds to operate on Michigan roads – reducing the number of trucks operating on roads and highways.

Sen. Green added that he is working with **MABA** to explore potential water transportation opportunities that could benefit farmers and businesses statewide, despite headwinds caused by burdensome regulations.

“We need to approach water transportation from a common-sense perspective – and that starts with fixing the ballast water regulations that make Michigan an island, surrounded by other states and provinces that have no such restriction on ballast water discharge, and shutting us off from significant economic opportunity,” said **Sen. Green**. “This is just one example of a common-sense solution to help address the logistics shortfalls faced by farmers statewide, and I appreciate the opportunity to come together with MABA leaders to continue this important discussion.”

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