



## **Farm Equipment Safety on Roadways Policy Development 2013**

### **Issue:**

As a result of urban encroachment, heightened driver distractions, increasing driver impatience and other factors, roadways have become more dangerous than ever for agricultural equipment operators.

### **Questions:**

1. What should be done to improve the safety of Tennessee farmers while transporting equipment?
2. What guidelines should escort drivers follow in order to be safe and fair to all users of public roads?

### **Background:**

Public policy has long allowed farmers, with careful precautions, access to transport equipment on public roads. This presents a conflict to other users of a road system that in Tennessee continues to grow in size and traffic count. Areas in all three grand divisions of Tennessee have been ranked among the fastest growing in the nation. Growth will continue to flourish, and number of automobiles on the road will only increase.

Busy and congested roadways lend themselves too impatient, sometimes enraged motorists. Couple these factors with distractions such as cellular devices, more intellectual automobile electronics and motorist advertising and slow moving, often over-sized farm machinery (OFM) is at high risk of being involved in an accident.

Current Tennessee law allows self-propelled farm equipment on roads. However, the equipment cannot obstruct traffic in the other lane. The equipment operator may be liable for any accidents resulting from an over-width machine. Some states have considered and adopted legislation that attempts to hedge the risks of transporting equipment on roads. The key element in these provisions is permission to use escort or pilot vehicles when transporting farm equipment.

The TN Department of Safety has permit procedures and escort guidelines for oversized loads transported on state roads. However, no legal guidelines exist for the everyday transport of farm machinery. Other states have developed legal guidelines. Farmers have the option of using escort vehicles. These guidelines specify lighting and signage requirements on the escort vehicle and other procedures for notifying oncoming traffic.

### **Farm Bureau Policy:**

With today's much larger equipment, every effort should be made to have all equipment folded to their narrowest transport width, including the removal of wide combine headers, before entering public roadways, unless they have adequate escorts in front of and behind the machinery. Tennessee law should not restrict the transport of oversized agricultural equipment along roadways.