

The Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for the consideration and passage of legislation that would allow the use of side-by-sides on public streets in Oregon, specifically under reasonable conditions that prioritize safety and responsible use. As an avid enthusiast of outdoor recreation and a concerned member of our community, I believe that allowing side-by-sides on certain public roads would bring numerous benefits to Oregon's residents and visitors.

First and foremost, side-by-sides are versatile, safe, and reliable vehicles that have evolved significantly in terms of technology and safety features. Modern side-by-sides are equipped with seat belts, roll cages, and advanced suspension systems that make them safer than ever before. Many are designed to meet specific standards for street use, including DOT-approved tires and lights, ensuring that these vehicles can be safely operated in a public road environment with the proper regulations in place.

Allowing side-by-sides to be driven on public streets would also provide a practical transportation solution for rural communities and outdoor enthusiasts who rely on these vehicles for accessing recreation areas, national forests, or local businesses. For residents in rural parts of Oregon, side-by-sides often serve as essential transportation tools, particularly when roads are difficult to navigate or when alternative options are limited. By allowing them to be legally operated on designated roads, it will foster economic growth for rural areas, encouraging tourism and supporting local businesses that cater to recreational activities.

In addition, allowing side-by-sides on public roads would reduce the need for vehicle trailering, which is often cumbersome and costly. Many people who use side-by-sides for outdoor activities, like camping or hunting, are required to transport their vehicles on trailers to access public land. By allowing side-by-sides to be operated on public streets, the need for trailers is diminished, reducing congestion on highways and lowering emissions associated with vehicle transportation.

Moreover, other states, including Nevada, Arizona, Utah, and Wyoming, have already implemented similar laws that permit side-by-sides on public roads with appropriate safety standards, and these states have seen positive results in terms of economic benefits, improved access to recreational areas, and overall public safety. For instance, the Arizona Peace Trail has proven to be a significant driver of economic growth, attracting tourists and supporting local businesses. It has brought increased sales to rental shops, fuel stations, retail stores, and restaurants in rural communities, creating jobs and raising tax revenue. These benefits are mirrored in Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming, where UTV-friendly laws have stimulated local economies, job creation, and infrastructure development.

In particular, these states have experienced:

- **Increased visitation and tourism:** UTV-friendly laws have made it easier for tourists to access off-road trails, national parks, and other outdoor attractions, leading to increased spending on lodging, food, fuel, and other necessities in local communities.
- **Business growth:** Local businesses such as OHV rental shops, fuel stations, restaurants, and retail outlets have seen surges in sales as off-road enthusiasts visit the area.
- **Job creation:** New employment opportunities in sectors such as OHV rentals, guided tours, vehicle dealerships, and hospitality have emerged, bolstering local economies.
- **Infrastructure development:** Investments in roads, trailheads, parking, and campgrounds have enhanced accessibility and quality of life for both residents and visitors.
- **Event promotion:** Special events, such as festivals and races, related to off-roading bring participants and spectators who contribute to the local economy.

Of course, it is important that any legislation includes strict requirements for operators, including insurance, turn signals, and restrictions on high-speed roadways to ensure public safety. The success of such a law would depend on carefully crafted regulations that balance safety with the needs of the community.

In closing, I strongly encourage the Joint Committee on Transportation to consider passing a law that allows the use of side-by-sides on public roads in Oregon. This legislation will not only promote responsible recreation but also stimulate local economies and improve the quality of life for many Oregonians who depend on side-by-sides for transportation and leisure. I appreciate your consideration of this important issue and look forward to seeing positive movement in the near future.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
James Mortensen