



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

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DATE: Feb. 11, 2025

TO: Joint Committee on Transportation

FROM: Amy Joyce, DMV Administrator, Oregon Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: HB 3155 – ATVs on Most Oregon Highways

INTRODUCTION

This bill would allow Class 1, 3, and 4 ATVs to operate on all Oregon roads except the interstates, provided the vehicle meets equipment standards for operating on a highway and that the vehicle is registered similar to a passenger vehicle with DMV.

DISCUSSION

ATV Classification and Operation on Roads

Oregon law classifies four types of ATVs, roughly categorized as follows:

- Class 1: four-wheelers/quads (straddle seat and handlebars)
- Class 2: 4x4's (e.g., Jeeps) and sand rails
- Class 3: motorcycles
- Class 4: side-by-sides (non-straddle seat, steering wheel, roll cage)

Vehicles classified as ATVs but that are also designed to operate on roads, such as Class 3 dual-sport motorcycles and Class 2 passenger vehicles like sport-utility vehicles and pick-up trucks, can legally operate on most roadways provided they have passenger vehicle-type equipment and registration (demonstrated by license plates and current stickers).

Other than those that are generally legal on roads (some Class 2 and 3), ATV operation on roadways is extremely limited under Oregon law. One exception is ATV highway access routes, which are designated by the Oregon Transportation Commission and connect off-road trails.

DMV/ODOT have two primary concerns with this bill: safety and the complexity of establishing a new vehicle registration program.

In general, ATVs are not designed for use on highways. Tires are a key piece of safety equipment, and ATV tires are not designed for roadway use. ATV tires and steering are designed to maximize offroad performance, but this can make them unwieldy on paved roadways, which can increase the risk of crashing. There are also no federal safety standards for ATVs on highways like there are for passenger vehicles and other vehicles designed to be used there. Additionally, other safety standards for ATVs are set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which begin by defining ATVs as "off-road vehicles." Many ATVs have a limited top speed (e.g., 30MPH); the bill would allow their operation on highways that have speed limits up to 70 MPH and that accommodate many different



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types of vehicles. Many of the vehicles on these roads, like pickups, medium-duty trucks, and semis, are substantially larger than many ATVs. In crash scenarios, the size disparity between ATVs and other vehicles has serious implications for the severity of rider injuries and fatality rates.

Other transportation system users (vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians) will be impacted as well. One fundamental element of road safety is that road users know what to expect in terms of vehicle types and user behaviors. Introducing a brand-new vehicle type will impact transportation system predictability. If the bill were to pass, it would be critical for ODOT to execute a robust communication campaign, so road users are aware of this change.

Other important considerations for the bill include driver licensing and the absence of a liability insurance requirement. Additionally, the availability of on-road liability insurance for ATVs is unknown.

The bill would also require DMV to establish a vehicle registration program for ATVs. Because there is no current registration for ATVs, DMV would need to stand up a new program requiring computer programming, license plate design and manufacture (including vendor contracting), rules, policies and procedures, training, etc. DMV would need an extended operational date on the bill to implement the ATV registration program.

CONCLUSION

ODOT/DMV is concerned about the safety impacts of allowing ATVs on nearly all Oregon roads. The department would need an extended operational date to be able to implement the bill's ATV registration program.