

Good morning. My name is T Jay Cunningham, and I am the Acting Director of the Bureau of Maintenance and Operations at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. On behalf of Secretary Yassmin Gramian, I would like to thank the Pennsylvania Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee for the opportunity to express our concerns regarding the proposed Tiadaghton State Forest All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Pilot Connector.

PennDOT's primary goal is to preserve and promote highway safety while accommodating all modes of transportation. We recognize the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code allows for the operation of ATVs on state highways under limited conditions, namely:

- During an emergency or when necessary to cross a bridge or culvert.
- To make a direct crossing of a street or highway under certain conditions.
- During special events under permit from the governmental agency having jurisdiction.

PennDOT has safety concerns regarding the designation of state highways for ATV use and for these reasons has not designated state highways for ATC use

- Generally speaking, ATVs are not designed for use on paved surfaces and typically labeled as such by manufacturers.
- The combination of tall ride height, aggressive tire tread and short wheelbase create an extreme rollover risk on paved surfaces.
- While operating at safe speeds, a dangerous speed differential is often created between ATVs and passenger vehicles.
- PennDOT surveyed other state DOTs in 2017 regarding their ATV policies (28 states responded). Results were mixed but all either do not allow ATV operation on state highways or have restrictions.
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PennDOT data indicates that between 2015 and 2019, there were 1,000 reportable crashes involving ATVs on public roadways in Pennsylvania, including 101 fatalities. This does not include crashes on trails or private property. On some roadways, PennDOT does allow designation of very low volume state highways as snowmobile roads. These roadways typically have no winter service and are barricaded and closed to other motorized vehicle traffic when open for snowmobiles. Therefore, the roads are closed and remain snow covered when being used by snowmobiles.

Since 2018, PennDOT has worked closely with DCNR on number of issues regarding ATVs, including proposed trail crossings and ATV operation within state highway rights-of-way. In particular, the Department has and continues to actively support DCNR for the "Regional ATV Pilot Program for Department Lands" as established in the 2020 PA Fiscal Code. PennDOT recognizes the importance of this regional trail pilot for the Commonwealth and is committed to working with DCNR to make it successful while maintaining highway safety for all users.

To create the regional trail pilot, DCNR proposed a network of ATV trails, forest roads, local roadways designated for ATV use, and a limited number of state highway segments in Potter and Tioga counties. PennDOT analyzed the proposed state highway segments for safety concerns, considering a number of factors including posted speed limits, traffic volumes, available sight distance and lane and shoulder widths. Considering the rural location of the trails, another concern was limited enforcement availability throughout the pilot area, to ensure the consistent and safe operation of ATVs

Ultimately PennDOT approved over eleven miles of state highway segments for ATV use during a pilot period to support the regional trail pilot. Segment lengths varied from less than one quarter mile to over 2 miles. PennDOT also worked with DCNR to plan and install over 200 signs for the pilot to direct riders and help keep them on the designated segments.

Although no major incidents were reported during the first season of the trail pilot, additional evaluation period is needed to provide enough data to form a thorough understanding of the safety impacts of ATVs operating with passenger vehicles on public roads. The history of ATV crashes and fatalities on public roads are reminders of the potential hazards and serious safety concerns that require diligence and careful monitoring of these operations.

Going forward, the Department will continue to work with DCNR to review the lessons learned from the first season of the pilot and implement any changes for the second season in 2022. This includes changes to routes included in the pilot, schedule, and addressing resident concerns such as dust mitigation, noise and aggressive driving. We will also continue to explore opportunities where feasible to make connections off the state roadway system or to allow for the construction of separate ATV trails within state highway right of way to avoid the need for ATVs to operate on pavement with passenger vehicles. This experience will help PennDOT determine if any long-term policy updates should be considered regarding ATVs on state highways.

On behalf of the Department, I appreciate the Pennsylvania Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee Chairs and their members for allowing me to speak with you today.

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