

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Robert Andrews. I'm from Preston CT and I'm here in support of Proposed House Bill 5104 and Proposed Senate Bills 715, 811, and 820.

I'm a volunteer hiking trail maintainer and it was on my trail in Voluntown, CT in 2008 that a confrontation between ATV riders and a landowner resulted in the landowner shooting out the tire of an ATV. The type of environmental damage that drove that landowner to a foolish and desperate act also caused the shutdown of a hiking trail on state land in Griswold, CT. *The escalating environmental damage and the continuing conflict between ATV advocates and those attempting to protect public and private property brings me here today to strongly support these bills.*

However, I believe that the steps proposed in these bills, if not part of a more comprehensive ATV program, could do more harm than good. In these four bills and in the seven other ATV bills proposed this year some critical issues are not addressed.

First is that most ATV riders will absolutely refuse to register until public trails are available.

Second is that a DMV registration leads to a property tax assessment, which riders say is unfair if they have no place to ride.

A third issue is that the cost of building and maintaining trails will be much higher than the funds that will be raised by even tripling or quadrupling the current registration fees.

Fourth - more than 90% of the hiking, biking, and horse trails we now have in Connecticut are built and maintained by private organizations. The state is unlikely ever to have the staffing or expertise to build and maintain ATV or any other types of trails.

*I have six suggestions for additions to these bills to address this. They have mostly to do with money and timing.*

First is that any funds collected by current or future ATV or dirt bike registration be used first to fund completion of Phase II of the Baystate Environmental Consultants ATV siting study done for DEP last year and that any increase in the fee for ATV registration be delayed until the siting study has been completed and accepted.

Second is that for trails on state land, a system of trail user fees be instituted to pay for trail maintenance. This would reduce the cost to users who only use ATVs out of state or on their own property or for competition.

Third is that the registration system be set up in such a way that either local property taxes not be assessed or that funds in lieu of property taxes be returned to towns where ATV facilities are located.

Fourth is that any design for ATV trails be coordinated with groups such as the National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council or other groups with the expertise and experience to do the job properly and that lessons learned from other states with ATV programs be part of the process. This would be similar to our current boat registrations.

Fifth is that a way be found to establish ATV trail or park operations without depleting any of the scarce resources of DEP, DMV or DOT. A quick look at what is required to maintain places like the Central Cycle track or the Mototown USA (whose building recently collapsed) will give you an idea of the need for heavy equipment, operators, trail monitoring, parking facilities and the like. *Those three state departments will have to bear some burden for registration, administration, enforcement and operations. But an entire separate organization within a state department or some quasi-public entity will be needed to make this work.*

Sixth is that the definition of an ATV needs to be updated. Some are larger now and the statutes should also take into account side-by-side units and other types of off-road vehicles or we'll be back here talking about UHVs, rock-crawlers, and other species of motorsports vehicles that also want a place to go. Instead of ATV trails, think OHV trails or OHV parks and you'll be closing in on the reality of the sport.

I wish you the best of luck in drafting legislation whether as part of these or other ATV bills before you.

Thank you.