

GUIDELINES FOR OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV) CONNECTOR ROUTES ON STATE TRUNKLINE HIGHWAYS

General

Each proposed Off Road Vehicle (ORV) Connector Route must be evaluated to determine if there is physical space available, within the highway right-of-way that can reasonably and safely accommodate ORV traffic, either on the shoulder or outside of the shoulder, or a combination of the two. Multiple factors should be considered when evaluating a proposed ORV connector route, such as highway speed, Average Daily Traffic (ADT) counts, roadside conditions and other factors relating to Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

Choosing the location for ORVs to ride:

The law provides that ORVs may travel on the highway shoulder or outside of the highway shoulder on the unmaintained portion of the highway right-of-way.

From a traffic and safety perspective it is preferred that ORV traffic be off of the highway shoulder, as far as possible on a dedicated path, to provide a safety buffer space between highway traffic and ORV traffic (even when there is adequate shoulder width). This could be a one-way trail or a two-way trail as warranted to fit site conditions.

Note: Although it may be preferred to have ORVs outside of the shoulder and separated from highway traffic, there often is no suitable location outside of the shoulder to put ORV traffic.

A connector route can utilize the highway shoulder and paths outside of the shoulder, in combination, to develop a route that utilizes the best available location(s) for ORV traffic to travel.

Highway Shoulder

The minimum required shoulder width shall be 8 feet wide, and may be gravel and/or paved. The shoulder is measured from the white solid line at the edge of the outside through lane to the shoulder hinge point (outside edge of gravel).

Off Shoulder Paths

An ORV path outside of the highway shoulder may be considered if there is adequate right-of-way width and suitable terrain.

Preferred conditions for an off shoulder path:

- Adequate (Right-of-Way) ROW width
- 8 feet available width for a one-way path or 12-14 feet available width for a two-way path
- Terrain is reasonably flat (1 on 6 or flatter)
- Path should be relatively straight with smooth horizontal curves
- Remote areas (rural) with very little roadside development

Areas that should be avoided for an off shoulder path:

- Slopes steeper than 1 on 6 (transverse or longitudinal) especially foreslopes and backslopes
- Ditches
- Sharp turns in the path

- Lawn areas
- Environmentally sensitive areas
- Hazards (culvert ends, guard rail ends, permanent structures, utility poles, etc.)
- Densely populated urban or residential properties

Off shoulder paths should be located as far from the nearest edge of the traveled lane as possible, when it is not possible to locate them outside of the safety clear zone. Two-Way paths may be located within the right-of-way at locations approved by MDOT.

Eligibility and length of a Connector Route

There is no statutory maximum length for a connector route; however, the length should be limited to the minimum length needed to connect ORV areas, routes, paths and essential services where there is no other reasonable and viable alternative to using a state trunkline highway as a connector.

Each request is evaluated on a case by case basis and shall meet one or more of the following eligibility requirements as stated in the law:

- Serves as a connector between two ORV areas, routes, or paths designated by the MDNR or an ORV user group.
- Provides access to tourist attractions, food service establishments, fuel, motels or other services.
- Serves as a connector between 2 segments of the same county road that run along discontinuous town lines and on which ORV use is authorized.
- Includes a bridge or culvert that allows an ORV to cross a river, stream, wetland, or gully that is not crossed by a county road or street on which ORV's are authorized to operate.

Highway Crossings and Approach Connections

When the ORV Route crosses or connects to the highway the route approach shall meet the same specifications and design standards as a residential driveway. MDOT reserves the right to determine the best location for ORV crossings and connections.

Non-Motorized Facilities

ORV traffic shall not be allowed to operate on designated non-motorized facilities such as sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes, and other paths.

Structures

A separate permit is required for the installation of structures such as bridges for crossing streams. The use of separate structures is preferred over using highway structures for the ORV Connector Route.

Sign Requirements

ORV Connector Routes shall be signed in accordance with the MDOT Sign Handbook for ORV Connector Routes on State Trunkline Highways. The Sign Handbook contains illustrations of example route configurations that can be used for reference when selecting the proposed layout of a connector.