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**2017 Wisconsin ACT 87
ATV Operation on Certain Highways**

[23.33\(1\)\(am\)4.](#)

Published: December 1, 2017

This law authorizes local governments to pass ordinances that allow ATVs/UTVs to operate on any highway within their jurisdiction if the posted motor vehicle speed limit is 35 MPH or less. For example, if a state or county highway runs through a village and the posted motor vehicle speed limit within the village reduces to 35 MPH, the village may enact an ordinance authorizing ATV/UTV travel on those specific sections of highways. NOTE: The statutory language states “authorize” the operation of ATVs/UTVs, however the language does not state that the highway must be “designated as an ATV route” or posted with ATV route signs. If the local government feels it’s necessary to post a sign notifying motorists of additional ATV/UTV traffic, they will have to enter into an agreement with WisDOT and request information on what type of signs may be posted and personnel that are authorized to conduct the work.

**2017 Wisconsin ACT 193
ATV Route Signing Requirements**

[23.33\(8\)\(e\)2](#)

Published: April 4, 2018

This act modifies the signing requirements for ATV routes designated by local governments and creates a new “Preferred route” sign (23.33 (1) (ja) intended to guide ATV route users to needed services such as gas, food, lodging, etc.

NOTE: There are no “UTV routes” or UTV route signs. Statute only uses the term “ATV route”, which are open to legal UTV traffic unless specifically prohibited.

The new signing requirements can be categorized in two ways:

- 1) A local government designates certain, specific roadways under its jurisdiction as ATV routes.
- 2) A local government designates ALL roadways under its jurisdiction as ATV routes.

1) A local government designates certain, specific roadways under its jurisdiction as ATV routes.

In this situation the local government designates some, but not all, of their roadways as routes. An ATV route sign must be posted at each point where the route begins and at each point where the route intersects an off-road ATV trail or a highway that is not designated as a route. The local government is not required to post route signs if it is less than ½ mile from a route sign posted on the same highway.

2) A local government designates ALL roadways under its jurisdiction as ATV routes

In this situation the local government designates all the roadways under its jurisdiction as ATV routes. This shall only include roadways in which they maintain and receive gas tax/maintenance funds for. In example, if a township enacts an ordinance designating “all town roads” as ATV routes this would not include any village or city streets nor any county or state highways located within the township’s territorial boundaries.

A sign must be posted on each roadway under its jurisdiction at the town, village, city or county lines. The signs must be positioned so that they can be viewed by motorists as they enter their jurisdiction. The signs shall alert motorists that all roadways under their jurisdiction have been designated as ATV routes, except where otherwise indicated. The local government shall post signs as appropriate to indicate roadways that are not designated as an ATV route, including roadways that continue into another jurisdiction which has not designated the same roadway as an ATV route.

Reference materials for local governments

Two helpful documents are being updated to reflect the recent law changes. One is “ATV Route Guidelines for Local Government” and the other is the “Trail Signing Handbook”. As you know, signs posted along all public highways in Wisconsin must follow the sign standards established in the Wisconsin DOT’s Sign Plate Manual and must be erected in accordance with the Wisconsin Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Once finalized, both documents will be forwarded to all the local government organizations, law enforcement leadership, the Wisconsin ATV Association, Wisconsin County Highway Safety Coordinator’s Association, Governor’s Off-Road Vehicle Council, WisDOT, county ATV patrol officers and all DNR L.E. These documents will also be highlighted on our main Wisconsin DNR - ATV webpage.

Sign Standards

The WI MUTCD and the WisDOT Sign Plate Manual provide the standards necessary for the safety of our highway users. In an effort to bring new and existing signs into compliance, please ensure that any non-governmental individual that has an ATV route question related to signing, posting or sign standards is referred to the officer in charge of highway maintenance for the jurisdiction in question. All ATV signs must be either placed by or under the direction of the local government which designates the ATV route. ATV club members may also be directed to the Wisconsin ATV Association (<https://www.watva.org/>) for information regarding a club member’s role when working with local governments.

Quick links:

- WisMUTCD: [.http://wisconsindot.gov/dtsdManuals/traffic-ops/manuals-and-standards/wmutcd/wismutcd.pdf](http://wisconsindot.gov/dtsdManuals/traffic-ops/manuals-and-standards/wmutcd/wismutcd.pdf)
- WisDOT Sign Plate Manual: <http://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/traffic-ops/manuals-and-standards/signplate/signplate.aspx>

- DNR ATV Page: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/atv/> Under “Related Links”
 - DNR ATV Route Guidelines for Local Government (under development).
 - DNR Trail Signing Handbook (under development).