

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Buffy Wicks, Chair
AB 1756 (Jeff Gonzalez) – As Amended March 9, 2026

Policy Committee: Transportation Vote: 16 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill extends by five years, to January 1, 2033, authorization of a combined-use off-highway vehicle (OHV) pilot program in the City of Needles.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Minor, absorbable costs to the California Highway Patrol (CHP), the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) to consult on reports that evaluate the pilot program.

Nonetheless, consistent with the committee's rules and practice, this bill is a candidate for the suspense file because it has the primary purpose of extending a pilot program.

COMMENTS:

In 2022, the Legislature approved AB 2152 (Smith), Chapter 185, Statutes of 2022, to authorize the City of Needles to establish a pilot program to designate combined-use highways to create a unified system of trails for OHVs. The legislation authorized the pilot program through January 1, 2028, and required the City of Needles to submit two reports to the Legislature by January 1, 2027. The first report is to be prepared in consultation with CHP, Caltrans and State Parks and is to include an evaluation of the safety and effectiveness of the pilot program, including its impact on traffic flows, safety and OHV usage on existing trails. The second report is to be prepared in consultation with DFW and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District and is to include an evaluation of any impacts on cultural resources and archaeological sites, streambed modifications and water quality impacts, impacts on wildlife and aquatic habitat, native plants, traffic, particulate pollution and noise.

The author contends this bill is needed "to allow meaningful evaluation of [the pilot program's] safety, environmental, and economic outcomes." According to the author, the majority of the pilot program period authorized in statute was "consumed by engineering analysis, public outreach, and CHP safety concurrence" and this bill "provides sufficient time to measure rural economic impact and safety performance."

The San Bernardino Sheriff's Department concurs:

The City of Needles has demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing this program responsibly...However, much of the initial pilot period was necessarily devoted to these foundational efforts, leaving

limited time to evaluate the program's long-term safety, environmental, and enforcement outcomes.

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