

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 2453 (Michelle Rodriguez and Davies)

As Amended May 28, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Authorizes a first responder to operate an off-highway motor vehicle (OHV) on a highway in an emergency response situation, and authorizes peace officers and first responders to operate OHVs on highways while performing official duties at a distance not to exceed five miles in order to access an off-highway operational area or location of patrol. Specifically, *this bill*:

- 1) Authorizes a first responder to operate an OHV on highway in an emergency response situation.
- 2) Authorizes a peace officer and first responder to operate an OHV on a highway while performing official duties subject to the following conditions:
 - a) An OHV may only be operated or driven on highway for up to five miles for purposes of accessing an off-highway operational area or location of patrol;
 - b) An applicable local authority must adopt a policy or plan, subject to public review, for the use of OHVs, and include the following elements:
 - i. A description of the activities or locations for which the local authority seeks to authorize operation of OHVs and the approximate timeframe or duration of the authorization.
 - ii. A description of any training, certification, or safety equipment that will be required by the local authority to ensure the safety of the public, including drivers and passengers.

Expressly authorizes a local authority to regulate the operation of an OHV by peace officers and first responders while performing official duties subject to the requirements above.

Senate Amendments

Add co-authors and make technical and non-substantive changes.

COMMENTS

OHVs are vehicles designed to be operated off-highway and can generally be categorized into three groups: all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), recreational off-road vehicles (ROVs), or utility terrain vehicles (UTVs). ATVs have three or more tires, a straddle seat for the operator, and handlebars for steering control. ROVs and UTVs have four or more tires, non-straddle or "side-by-side" seating, and automotive-type controls for steering, throttle, and braking (i.e., a steering wheel and pedals). UTVs are generally equipped with larger cargo beds and can be retrofitted for law enforcement purposes by installing emergency lighting, sirens, logos, communications devices, and cab enclosures.

Law enforcement increasingly relies on OHVs. Law enforcement first begun using OHVs in the 1970s given their ability to access remote areas inaccessible by foot or patrol cars. During the 1980s and 90s, a large OHV manufacturer begun producing militarized ATVs for the U.S. Army and other military services. This same manufacturer started making OHVs for law enforcement, fire departments and rescue operations in 2018 and others followed. Marketing materials for these vehicles generally describe their enhanced ability to provide access in rugged terrain or congested urban settings, flexibility given their compact size, and reduced operations and maintenance costs compared to a regular patrol vehicle. Law enforcement or first responders have used OHVs for search and rescue, crowd and event control, remote patrols (e.g., public lands, beaches), and medical or emergency incident response.

Current law authorizes peace officers to operate an OHV on highway, without limitation, when responding to an emergency. The Cities of Carlsbad and Ontario, co-sponsors of this bill, assert that the above authority should be expanded to include first responders and for purposes other than emergencies where traditional patrol vehicle access is constrained or where trailering an OHV becomes impractical. These include beach patrols, incident response at parks or open space areas, concerts, sporting events, street fairs or similar events closed to vehicle traffic.

The City of Ontario writes, "Police officers may use recreational off-road vehicles as a practical tool to support special events, non-proactive enforcement operations, and respond to emergent situations in those spaces. These vehicles allow officers to safely and efficiently navigate areas not easily accessible by standard patrol units—such as parks, trails, large venues, and pedestrian-heavy environments—enhancing visibility, response capability, and public safety. Their use is intended to facilitate community engagement, provide rapid assistance, and support event logistics, rather than to conduct routine traffic enforcement or proactive policing activities."

According to the City of Carlsbad. "AB 2453 closes a restrictive gap in our current law by ensuring that all first responders—not just peace officers—can legally operate UTVs and other OHVs on public highways when seconds matter most. By granting our fire, search and rescue, and medical teams the same flexibility already afforded to law enforcement, we are equipping them with the tools necessary to save lives in difficult terrain. This bill is a vital update to our vehicle code that prioritizes public safety and ensures our heroes can do their jobs without unnecessary legal hurdles."

Reasonable limitations requested by the California Highway Patrol (CHP). Despite the merits of this bill, the CHP has requested reasonable limitations on the use of OHVs on a highway because they are typically not designed or warrantied by manufacturers to be operated on streets or roads. The City of Carlsbad indicates that UTV manufacturers do not currently provide vehicle identification numbers or VINs necessary for registration with the DMV because UTVs are not designed to be operated on-road.

As such, it is prudent to discourage over-reliance on OHVs for traditional patrol purposes. Both Carlsbad and Ontario indicate that their intended use of OHVs is not for routine traffic enforcement or traditional policing activities. This bill limits on-highway OHV use by peace officers and first responders to up to five miles for purposes of accessing an off-highway operational area or location of patrol. Moreover, the relevant local authority must first adopt a policy or plan, subject to public review, describing their intended use and the safety, training or other measures the local authority will undertake to ensure the safety of drivers, occupants and the public.

According to the Author

"California's first responders and peace officers are frequently required to operate recreational off-highway vehicles (ROHVs) in emergency, rescue, and public safety situations where strict compliance with existing passenger safety requirements may not be feasible and operation restrictions prohibit travel of any distance on surface streets and thoroughfares thereby inhibiting response efficacy and efficiency. Current law was designed for recreational use and does not account for the urgent, unpredictable conditions under which these professionals must act to protect life and property. This bill provides a narrow and practical exemption to ensure that first responders and peace officers can perform their duties effectively without being constrained by provisions that were not intended for first responder operations or urgent situations. By clarifying that these requirements do not apply in the course of official duties, the bill promotes public safety while recognizing the unique demands placed on those who respond in critical situations."

Arguments in Support

According to the City of Ontario "Police officers may use recreational off-road vehicles as a practical tool to support special events, non-proactive enforcement operations, and respond to emergent situations in those spaces. These vehicles allow officers to safely and efficiently navigate areas not easily accessible by standard patrol units—such as parks, trails, large venues, and pedestrian-heavy environments—enhancing visibility, response capability, and public safety. Their use is intended to facilitate community engagement, provide rapid assistance, and support event logistics, rather than to conduct routine traffic enforcement or proactive policing activities."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, minor state costs, if any

VOTES:**ASM TRANSPORTATION: 16-0-0**

YES: Wilson, Davies, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Carrillo, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Jackson, Lackey, Macedo, Papan, Ransom, Rogers, Sharp-Collins, Ward

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 66-0-14

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp- Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Ward, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Bonta, Chen, Flora, Gallagher, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Papan, Petrie-Norris, Celeste Rodriguez, Valencia, Wallis, Wicks

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alvarado-Gil

UPDATED

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