



City of Jackson

July 25, 2022

The Honorable Mayor Dwain Hahs and Members of the Board of Alderman

Re: Proposed usage of UTVs and ROVs on city streets

Fire Chief Jason Mouser and I want to take the opportunity to formally address the recent requests for Utility Vehicles (UTVs) and Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles (ROVs) for use on city streets. We have conducted some research on the matter and based on several factors, we do not recommend approval of such an ordinance.

We have found that several municipalities and counties within Missouri have adopted such an ordinance, but the majority are smaller and more rural. Most do not share city limits with much larger cities nor have the large amount of traffic as Jackson. Jackson, we know has a very large volume of daytime traffic within our city limits. We are growing and the volume of traffic will continue to grow. Traffic accidents will likely increase as our streets and highways get more congested. The Jackson Police Department and Jackson Fire and Rescue respond to an average of 300 to 400 accidents annually with almost half involving injuries and at least one fatality. In our most recent city survey, traffic concerns were our citizen's number one priority. As public safety professionals, we have concerns that allowing UTVs in the mix of large volumes of traffic poses a significant threat to the safety of the operator and passengers of a UTV.


We also researched several operator's manuals and every manual states that their vehicles are not intended or recommended for use on roadways or public roads. For example, the 2022 Polaris 500 series operator's manual states, "This vehicle is for off road use only. Never operate on public roads." The Polaris Ace and Ranger 570 series operator's manuals state, "Do not allow operation on public roads (unless designated for off-highway access) collisions with cars and trucks can occur." The John Deere utility vehicle 825 series operator's manual states, "For off-road use only. Not intended for use on public roads or highways." The fact that the major manufacturers of some of the most popular UTVs and Off-Highway Vehicles clearly advise against the use of their UTV on public highways and roads more than supports our position. UTVs are not designed for use on public highways and roads, nor designed to withstand crashes with larger vehicles. There were many tests and studies conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on the stability of the UTVs. Not only can there be serious consequences with collisions with cars and trucks but, "the rollover threshold is very low and can easily be exceeded even during proper use of the vehicle" according to the NHTSA.


We recently reached out to the Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association (ROHVA). This association was formed to promote the safe and responsible use of recreational off-highway vehicles manufactured or distributed in North America. They are accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), which are the same standards both Jackson Fire and Rescue and Jackson Police Department and some city departments adhere to on some safety equipment. The ROHVA is sponsored by some of the major manufactures of UTVs, such as Polaris, Honda, Kawasaki, Mahindra, Textron Specialized Vehicles, and Yamaha.

While reaching out to the association in regards to their position to on-highway operation of UTVs, side-by-sides, and other recreational off-highway vehicles or ROVs, we were directed to their government relations department which provided me a document stating their position. We have attached a copy of their statement to this letter. We want the Board to be informed as much as possible when posed with the often tough and sometimes challenging decisions facing each of you on a weekly basis.

Based on these findings, it is our recommendation that the Board not adopt an ordinance allowing for the use of UTVs or Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles on city streets. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,


James M. Humphreys
Chief of Police JPD


Jason Mouser
Fire Chief JFR