



Position Statement

Travel Management, E-Bike, and Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use on BLM-Administered Public Lands

Executive Summary

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) and e-bike use are legitimate and appropriate uses of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). As with all public land uses, OHV and e-bike activities must be managed in a manner consistent with the land's capability to sustain such use while considering impacts on natural and cultural resources, other public land users, and public safety.

The BLM has transitioned from a system of generally unrestricted travel to one that limits travel to designated roads, trails, and areas. Through land use planning and travel management processes, transportation networks can be developed and managed to accommodate a variety of recreation, access, and resource management needs.

BLM-administered public lands belong to the American people. Managed under the principle of multiple use, these lands should remain open and accessible unless resource protection concerns, public safety considerations, or other management objectives warrant restrictions in specific locations. The BLM has both the authority and responsibility to determine appropriate levels of access and the conditions governing motorized and non-motorized travel.

Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management (TTM) planning is a high priority for the BLM. TTM has evolved beyond motorized recreation management to encompass all forms of public, administrative, and commercial access. The process begins with development of a Resource Management Plan (RMP), which establishes broad travel management direction and identifies Travel Management Area designations needed to address transportation and access issues.

Following completion of an RMP, implementation-level TTM planning addresses resource management and access needs for all transportation modes, including motorized vehicles, e-bikes, hiking, bicycling, equestrian and pack-animal use, winter travel, watercraft, and aircraft access where appropriate. Access to federal and state-owned waters across BLM-administered lands is also considered.

By establishing designated road, trail, and area networks through the planning process, field offices can effectively manage transportation systems to support resource management objectives,

recreational opportunities, and authorized uses while protecting public lands and natural resources to the greatest extent practicable.



Background

Historically, unrestricted travel on public lands resulted in extensive networks of roads and trails that were often not designed to accommodate modern recreational, commercial, and administrative demands. The challenge has been to provide opportunities for public access and recreation while protecting natural and cultural resources and minimizing conflicts among users.

Today, both the volume and diversity of public land travel continue to increase. Americans are seeking greater outdoor recreation opportunities, while advances in technology have expanded access to previously remote areas. Modern four-wheel-drive vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, mountain bikes, e-bikes, and other equipment allow users to travel farther and more easily than ever before. Manufacturers and recreation industries actively promote these capabilities, and the public increasingly looks to BLM-administered lands as destinations for these activities.

More than 57 million people live within 25 miles of BLM-administered public lands, and public demand for recreation and access continues to grow. Consequently, access and travel must be managed in a manner consistent with the land's ability to sustain use while minimizing impacts on natural and cultural resources and reducing conflicts among users.

In 2016, the BLM revised its Transportation Planning Manual (MS-1626), followed by issuance of the Travel and Transportation Management Handbook. Together, these documents provide a comprehensive framework for planning and managing all modes of travel on BLM-administered public lands. The guidance emphasizes comprehensive travel planning, interdisciplinary analysis, and public involvement in transportation decision-making.

The Manual and Handbook direct that access decisions be made primarily at the local level through implementation-level TTM planning with meaningful public participation. Certain federal laws and policies, including the Wilderness Act and the Endangered Species Act, may limit or prohibit specific uses in designated areas. In most situations, however, travel and access decisions should be based on resource conditions, public input, and coordination with state and local governments.

These planning efforts frequently require balancing a wide range of competing interests and management priorities.

PLF Position

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF):

- Endorses the BLM Transportation Planning Manual (MS-1626) and the Travel and Transportation Management Handbook as effective frameworks for planning and managing all modes of travel on public lands.
- Supports designing travel systems based on Resource Management Plan objectives and transportation network goals rather than simply adopting existing roads and trails. Well-designed travel systems can direct use away from sensitive resources while providing high-quality recreational opportunities and access necessary for public, commercial, and administrative uses.
- Supports completion of route and area designations through a public, comprehensive, and collaborative TTM planning process using two levels of decision-making:
 - a. Areas should continue to be designated as Open, Limited, or Closed to motorized travel for all BLM-administered lands within the planning area of a Resource Management Plan. Open-area designations should be limited to locations that can be effectively managed to provide a high-quality motorized recreation experience.
 - b. Individual roads, primitive roads, and trails should be designated for all uses through implementation-level planning tiered to the RMP and guided by established designation criteria.
- Supports closure and reclamation of roads constructed for temporary resource development activities, such as timber harvesting or mineral development, once operations are complete. Exceptions may be appropriate when the BLM determines that a route should become part of the long-term transportation system or when existing rights-of-way or other management requirements necessitate continued access.
- Supports proactive management of the rapidly growing use of e-bikes by evaluating both existing and potential future routes where e-bike use may be appropriate through TTM planning and other implementation-level decisions.
- Supports increased investment in signage, maps, recreation facilities, road and trail maintenance, and visitor education. Public feedback consistently demonstrates support for improved infrastructure and management to accommodate recreation use.
- Recognizes that volunteers, partner organizations and user groups are valuable resources and encourages the BLM to expand cooperative agreements and partnerships that assist in achieving travel and transportation management objectives.

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