

## “The Roads Less Traveled: Minimum Maintenance Roads”

### Key Points: A00418/S02537

- **NYS Local Road Classification Task Force** issued guidelines; most recent update in 2012
- Supports the **NYS Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act** of 2010
- Must meet strict definitions and vehicle counts to be considered for designation; adjacent landowner notification and public hearing requirements
- Minimum maintenance designation is able to be amended at the town board’s approval and as circumstances dictate
- Predominantly these roads are highways by use – towns only have jurisdiction in the actual roadway, nothing along shoulders
- Designations done using home rule authority; challenges to that authority could lead to budget breaking requests for widening these traditional country lanes; **asking the State legislature to pass a law allowing these designations and traditional uses**

### Tug Hill

- Very low use roads that support the **working landscape** – forest, farming and recreation; the culture and heritage of Tug Hill is closely tied to these roads; widening them to 48.5 feet per state law would cause tremendous environmental impacts on wetlands, streams, state forests
- 158 miles of minimum maintenance roads on Tug Hill
  - 100 miles serve as snowmobile trails in the winter
  - 83 miles have state land on both or one sides – **Forest Preserve** counties
  - 59 miles in **Tug Hill core forest** – regional, statewide, and international significance
- Most snowfall east of Rocky Mountains – in 2016-17 winter season, parts of Tug Hill received **30 feet of snow**; seasonal designation not feasible with snowpack long past April 1
- Cost control tool for rural towns with small highway budgets working to stay under tax cap
- To improve roads for year-round maintenance, cost **\$100,000/mile**; average total town budget in core area is \$700,000, 75% of which is dedicated to highways
- Town road system a relic of early times when population and development was at its peak
- Allows town to maintain roads accessing agricultural, forestry, and recreational lands while controlling development and costs
- Entirely separate from ATV issue; vehicle & traffic law currently allows any road to be opened to ATVs that meets specific connector criteria; minimum maintenance road designation does not affect whether or not a road is open for ATVs



*A town snow plow on a minimum maintenance road in the town of Martinsburg demonstrates the difficulty of winter plowing.*



*Upper photo: Flat Rock/Poor Road intersection at height of snow season.  
Lower photo: Same intersection, first week in May.  
Note relation of stop sign to man's height.*



*Syracuse meteorologist Jim Teske (5'8" tall) demonstrates how tall this Boylston snowbank is, February 2017. This snowbank actually required a large blower to cut the bank back.*