

“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.

