

ALASKA LEGISLATURE

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

Angoon · Coffman Cove · Craig · Edna Bay · Elfin Cove · Game Creek · Hollis · Hoonah · Kake · Kasaan · Klawock · Kupreanof · Naukati · Pelican Petersburg · Point Baker · Port Alexander · Port Protection · Sitka · Tenakee Springs · Thorne Bay · Whale Pass

Off-Highway Driver's Licenses FAQs

What are off-highway driver's licenses?

Currently, 295 Alaskan communities off the road system qualify for off-highway driver's licenses. They're great — they allow rural residents to get driver's licenses through the mail (they don't require a photo or road test), instead of having to fly to Anchorage or Juneau to go to the DMV.

How does this bill change them?

This amendment tweaks the eligibility criteria for communities who qualify for these licenses. We think there should be two requirements: you live in an off-highway community, and your community doesn't have a DMV.

Unfortunately, right now there's two additional qualifications: your town can't have ferry service (since it technically counts as the state highway, even though it requires time and money to "drive" on a ferry to a DMV) and your community can't have a traffic count of less than 499. We want to axe those two criteria.

What's a traffic count and why does it matter?

Traffic counts are the average times a road is driven over during a day. The counts are an arbitrary criteria that do little to illustrate the reality of driving in rural places: even small towns (population 200 or 300) can have traffic counts over 500 because they have so few roads.

The counts are also selectively performed and enforced. DOT hasn't done traffic counts in most of the places that qualify for off-highway licenses: there's little reason to do counts in rural communities because they don't qualify for highway funding. If traffic counts were performed in many of the rural communities that currently qualify, they likely would have counts large enough to get kicked off the list.

What changes in real life by the changing the eligibility criteria?

This amendment means that Seldovia, Angoon, Hoonah, and Kake would now qualify for off-highway licenses, because they have no road access and no DMV. This amendment also safeguards all off-highway communities from getting disqualified if a traffic count is done in their town.

