

Wilson's Grove HOA

Maryland Law Summary: Dirt Bikes, ATVs, and Electric Bikes

The Wilson's Grove HOA Board of Directors consulted with our attorney to provide the information in this document. It summarizes how Maryland law treats dirt bikes, ATVs, and electric bikes, and how those laws apply to operation within our community. It is intended to help residents understand what is and is not legal, particularly given the recent reports of off-road vehicles operating in Wilson's Grove.

The General Rule

According to Maryland Vehicle Law (Title 13, § 13-402), any motor vehicle operated on a highway must generally be registered and insured. Most ATVs and dirt bikes do not meet the equipment requirements for registration.

ATVs and four-wheelers are generally not lawful for operation on public roads in Anne Arundel County because they typically lack required safety equipment such as headlights, mirrors, turn signals, and compliant braking systems.

Gas-powered dirt bikes are also generally prohibited on public roads and sidewalks unless properly titled, registered, insured, and equipped for lawful street use. They would likewise be prohibited on Association common property absent express authorization.

What Is Illegal

- **Riding on Public Roads:** Operating an unregistered dirt bike or ATV on any public street, highway, sidewalk, or alley.
- **Riding in Public Parks:** Operating motorized vehicles through community parks or green spaces where such vehicles are prohibited.
- **Trespassing on Private Property:** Riding on private land without the owner's permission.
- **Riding on School-Owned Fields:** Damage to school property may constitute a criminal offense. Damage of \$1,000 or more may carry significant criminal penalties under Maryland law.

Electric Bikes vs. Electric Dirt Bikes

This is the area generating the most confusion. Maryland law distinguishes between street-legal e-bikes and high-powered electric vehicles that look similar but are regulated very differently.

Street-Legal Electric Bicycles (E-Bikes): If a bicycle has operable pedals, a motor of 750 watts or less, and falls within Maryland's e-bike classifications, it is generally treated as a bicycle rather than a motor vehicle. Such bikes may typically be used on public roads, bicycle lanes, and certain paths where otherwise permitted, subject to applicable restrictions. Riders under age 16 must generally wear a helmet.

Full-Power Electric Dirt Bikes / E-Motos: If a throttle-powered bike lacks operable pedals or exceeds 750 watts (for example, Sur-Ron or Talaria style bikes), it may fall outside Maryland's e-bike definition and instead be regulated as an off-road vehicle, moped, or motorcycle depending on configuration. These vehicles are generally not permitted on sidewalks, trails, or Association common areas, and lawful road use would depend on registration and compliance with applicable vehicle laws.

Maryland E-Bike Classes

- **Class 1:** Pedal-assist only; motor assistance stops at 20 mph.
- **Class 2:** Throttle-assisted or pedal-assist; motor assistance stops at 20 mph.
- **Class 3:** Pedal-assist only; motor assistance stops at 28 mph.

Class 1, 2, and 3 e-bikes are generally lawful in Maryland, subject to location-specific restrictions, trail rules, age requirements, and safe operation standards.

How to Ride the Right Way

- **Stay Off-Road:** Use only designated off-road vehicle (ORV) trails or private property where you have express permission.
- **Get Titled:** Maryland law generally requires ATVs and off-road motorcycles to be titled.
- **Trailer It:** Use a truck or trailer to transport the vehicle to authorized riding areas rather than riding it on public roads.

This summary is provided for general informational purposes. Residents with specific legal questions should consult an attorney.