



## Consolidating Off-Road Vehicle Registration

### Introduction

Massachusetts suffers from a wastefully duplicative system for registering motor vehicles. There are separate registration sites and bureaucracies for on-road and off-road vehicles. The Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) registers cars, busses, trucks, motorcycles and all other on-road vehicles. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' (EOEA) Registration and Titling Bureau registers off-road vehicles—boats, snowmobiles and all terrain vehicles (ATVs).

We propose to close all five Registration and Titling Bureau offices and allow the RMV to register all motor vehicles—boats, ATVs and snowmobiles included. This consolidation would bring significant savings while actually improving service for off-road vehicle owners.

### The Problem

The EOEA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) is responsible for registering all Massachusetts off-road vehicles—boats, snowmobiles and ATVs. The OLE's Registration and Titling Bureau operates five offices throughout the state. Three of the five offices (Hyannis, Worcester and Fall River) share locations with Department of Revenue offices, allowing citizens to register their boats and pay the sales tax in the same building. The Springfield office is at the same location as a Registry of Motor Vehicles office, and the Boston office stands alone. According to the Registration and Titling Bureau, there are more than 152,000 boats, 26,000 ATVs and 18,000 snowmobiles currently registered. Only new registrations require office visits since renewals are done through the mail.

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Not only are there two different bureaucracies that handle registrations, but they overlap geographically as well. Four of the five Registration and Titling Bureau offices are located in the same municipality as an RMV office.

### **The Solution**

We propose to close all five Registration and Titling Offices and fold their services into the 35 existing RMV offices. The EOEA should sign an Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) with EOT that would allow the RMV to register all off-road vehicles. Signing an ISA would allow the EOEA to continue receiving the Coast Guard's Federal Boating Safety Funds, which would allow it to continue working with the Marine Theft Bureau. With nominal staff increases of one or two persons each, RMV offices could handle all the work of the existing OLE offices. The EOEA could certainly keep some staff that would oversee questionable title situations and maintain a working relationship with the Marine Theft Bureau and the Commonwealth.

Consolidation would save money while improving access and quality of service. If the RMV became the registration site for all motor vehicles, there would be 35 locations for the owners of off-road vehicles to register, not 5. Citizens would also be able to register boats and trailers in the same office with the same form. The Titling Bureau's umbrella agency, EOEA, could at the same time hand over the other off-road vehicle registration responsibilities to the Executive Office of Transportation, under which the RMV operates. This is a remarkable opportunity for the Commonwealth to eliminate a duplication of services by two agencies. By folding all vehicle registration into the RMV, the state would eliminate an unnecessary state agency and bureaucracy, saving taxpayer dollars while at the same time significantly improving the service and efficiency of the off-road vehicle registration process.

### **Relevance to Massachusetts**

In recent years, the EOEA and others have tried to streamline the boat registration process. The OLE is opposed to our proposed solution of handing over OLE's boat registration responsibilities to the RMV, arguing that boat registration is more complicated than auto registration. The OLE points out that boat title requirements vary greatly state-to-state and that Massachusetts is surrounded by states that do not require titles for boats. OLE argues that the existence of the Registration and Titling Bureau allows for an excellent working relationship with the Massachusetts Environmental Police's Marine Theft Bureau. This agency works to ensure that stolen boats are not re-registered. Another reason why the OLE and EOEA may be reluctant to transfer off-road vehicle registration to the EOT and RMV is that currently the Coast Guard grants approximately \$1 million a year to the OLE in Coast Guard Federal Boat Safety Funds to help administer boat registration, funds the EOEA would lose to EOT should the RMV assume the responsibility of registering boats.

The OLE has offered its own reform proposal. They have suggested that the Commonwealth create an "outdoorsman one-stop shop." This agency would, ideally, register boats and trailers; process sales tax payments; and administer hunting, fishing and non-commercial lobster licenses. Recently, however, Massachusetts has started accepting sales tax payments through the internet, and hunting, fishing, and non-commercial lobster licenses can also be applied for online – further reducing the need for staffed customer service agencies.

Another possibility is to keep off-road-vehicle-titling responsibilities within the OLE and EOEA, but move the OLE Registration and Titling Offices to existing RMV locations. This would certainly improve service, but the cost savings may not be worth the marginal improvement. The EOEA could also sign an ISA with the EOT, and allow the OLE's Registration and Titling Offices to register boat trailers on-location.

## Conclusion

While the other streamlining proposals may bring some degree of savings, they all leave duplicative layers of bureaucracy in place. Our proposal's implementation of an ISA addresses EOEAs concerns about the potential loss of federal funding. The existence of separate offices for registering on-road and off-road vehicles represents the worst kind of state agency duplication, and bureaucratic excess. The economies of scale inherent in one-stop vehicle registration would improve services while reducing the cost to the taxpayer.



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