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Alaska State Senate
Senator Ralph Seekins
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SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR SENATE BILL 327

“An Act relating to pedestrians using rollerblades, roller skates, and similar devices.”

For many years roller-skiers’ legal use of public roadways was, more or less, taken for granted. This assumption was successfully challenged in the Fairbanks area last fall. [Senate Bill 327](#) seeks to remedy this situation by specifically allowing the use of particular wheeled devices on those public roadways also available to bicyclists. It also recommends a set of safety standards for the use of these devices.

Alaska is home to some of the best international, national, collegiate, and junior cross-country skiers on the planet. In fact, seven of the ten Alaskans competing in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City were cross-country skiers. Imagine that. *Seven* Olympic cross-country skiers from such a small state as ours! This speaks volumes not only about our skiers’ work ethic but also their training opportunities.

The natural preference of many of these world-class athletes would, no doubt, have Alaska covered in snow year-round. Since this is not a reasonable near-term possibility, the use of wheeled skis to imitate snow skiing has grown to become an effective training tool for use during non-winter months. What’s more, Alaska is becoming well known nationally and internationally as a favored summer-time training site.

For these reasons, it is the intent of the proposed legislation to accommodate this seasonal use of some of our roadways. In fact, other northern locales — such as Norway, Sweden and Canada — have, for many years, supported the efforts of their cross-country athletes with similar provisions. Furthermore, the proposed legislation borrows heavily from Cross Country Canada’s policy respecting the use of roller-skis on public roads.

Senate Bill 327 seeks to accommodate this important training activity by utilizing safe and reasonable methods for sharing roadway surfaces with motorized vehicles. It has garnered a groundswell of support throughout the cross-country community ranging from Alaska’s Interior region to Southcentral to the Kenai Peninsula.

The 2006 Winter Olympic games are just around the corner. Would it be too much to expect seven (or more) of our cross-country skiers to make the trip to Torino, Italy? Of course not! In fact, a little courtesy and common sense combined with a small statutory revision can help make it happen.