



What is rat-running and is it illegal?

Not to be confused with Missouri's yearly biker event called the [Rat Run](#) or the [biking route](#) in West England, rat running is the practice of using side streets, residential roads, parking lots, or other less congested areas to avoid traffic and traffic lights on main roads or highways. The origin of the phrase is unknown, though people

in Great Britain and Australia also use the term similarly to compare people driving through back roads, much like rats maneuvering their way through houses, mazes, or streets.

While it is often frowned upon, rat running is a common occurrence. Who wouldn't take a side street after sitting through three green lights at an intersection and still unable to cross? All the Southern states have statutes stating that drivers must obey traffic control devices, leaving ambiguity on whether taking alternative routes to avoid them counts as disobedience.



Florida, Texas, and Virginia are the only states with statutes directly addressing rat running and are as follows: Florida law states that no driver can use another roadway to avoid obeying a traffic control device, Texas law states that a driver may not use a sidewalk, driveway, parking lot, or business or residential entrance at an intersection to turn right or left from one highway to another highway, and Virginia law states that drivers cannot turn off a roadway or use private or public property to avoid a traffic control device.

It is important to note that while most of the Southern states have not implemented legislation prohibiting rat running, some counties and cities have local ordinances in places addressing rat running.



Why is rat running so controversial? Here are some Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
<p>Timesaving: Rat running can sometimes provide a quicker route to a destination by avoiding congested main roads or highways, especially during peak traffic hours. This can be particularly advantageous for commuters seeking to minimize travel time.</p>	<p>Pollution: The influx of additional vehicles can lead to higher levels of air and noise pollution, decreasing the quality of life and affecting resident health, particularly for vulnerable communities.</p>
<p>Avoiding traffic jams: Rat running allows drivers to bypass traffic congestion on major roads, potentially reducing the frustration and stress of being stuck in traffic.</p>	<p>Safety hazards: The influx of additional vehicles on residential streets can pose safety risks to pedestrians, cyclists, and children playing outdoors. Higher traffic volumes can increase the likelihood of accidents and collisions, particularly in areas where speed limits may not be strictly enforced.</p>
<p>Flexibility: Rat running offers drivers alternative routes, offering more options for navigating an area. This flexibility can be beneficial when unexpected road closures, accidents, or other disruptions occur on main routes.</p>	<p>Negative impact on property values: The perception of increased traffic and congestion due to rat running can potentially lower property values in affected residential areas. Homebuyers may be less inclined to purchase properties in neighborhoods with heavy rat run traffic, leading to decreased demand and property devaluation.</p>
<p>Local knowledge: Rat running often relies on familiarity with local roads and shortcuts. Drivers familiar with the area may use this knowledge to navigate efficiently and avoid traffic bottlenecks.</p>	<p>Increased traffic congestion: Rat running can lead to increased traffic volumes on residential streets not designed to handle high levels of traffic. This can result in congestion, particularly during peak hours, making it more challenging for residents to navigate their neighborhoods safely and efficiently.</p>

Rat Running Laws in Southern States

State	Code	Is Rat Running Prohibited
Alabama	32-5A-190	No
Arkansas	27-51-104	No
Florida	23.316.074	Yes
Georgia	40-6-20	No
Kentucky	189.290	No
Louisiana	14:99	No
Mississippi	63-3-313	No
Missouri	304.271	No
North Carolina	20-140	No
Oklahoma	47-11-201	No
South Carolina	56-5-950	No
Tennessee	55-8-109	No
Texas	545.423	Yes
Virginia	46.2-833.1	Yes
West Virginia	17C-3-4	No