



Written Testimony to the National Parks, Forests, & Public Lands Subcommittee concerning the Biking on Long-Distance Trails Act - HR 6337

February 11, 2022

Dear Ranking Member Westerman,

Thank you for your thoughtful question regarding the challenges land management agencies may face when trying to create long-distance bike trails on federal land.

First, I am not an expert on the policy of the various land management agencies, therefore this is by no means testimony from an expert on the topic. As a mountain bike advocate and board member of the Southern Nevada Mountain Bike Association, I am happy to share my thoughts.

Examples of challenges involved in establishing long-distance trails on federal land may include: different agencies having different policies regarding mountain bikes, disconnected federal lands, coordination between agencies, user conflict, and limited resources for the creation of trails.

For each of these challenges, there are also solutions. Good legislation, such as the BOLT Act, will encourage land agencies to come together with the common goal of opening up new recreational opportunities, with minimal environmental impact, on public lands. Multi-use trails across the country have shown that trails can be shared harmoniously and educating trail users on proper trail etiquette supports this. Fragmented areas of public lands can be connected via roads or easements on private land. Finally, grants, donations, and working with local trail advocacy groups such as SNMBA, the organization I am involved with, can help offset the cost of building and maintaining trails.

Ultimately, the benefits of long-distance trails far outweigh the challenges. Over the past twenty years, mountain biking has grown from a little-known sport to a mainstream activity. In recent years, mountain biking's popularity has grown exponentially; trail counts comparing 2019 to 2020 show a 100-500% increase. Mountain biking is currently the fastest growing high school sport in the country so its growth shows no indication of slowing. Investing in cycling infrastructure will help meet the growing demand for mountain bike trails and the development of long-distance bike trails will help meet mountain bikers' increased desire for immersive

experiences. There is also an economic benefit to the communities adjacent to mountain bike trails. Bentonville, AR, in your home state, is an example of a community that has benefitted economically from an investment in cycling infrastructure. Bentonville was recently named the “Mountain Biking Capital of the World”! Not only has Bentonville hosted a myriad of recent cycling events including the Cyclocross World Championships, but it is also attracting people within the cycling industry to relocate there. Communities also profit from the mental and physical health benefits access to the outdoors and cycling provides.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in front of the National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee and I appreciate your thoughtful question.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Hanks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jen Hanks
Board Member and Mountain Biking Advocate
Southern Nevada Mountain Bike Association