



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

Thank you Chairman Neguse and Ranking Member Fulcher and the rest of the members of the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today. I would also like to thank Representative Susie Lee, my congressional representative from Nevada, for her cosponsorship of this important legislation. My name is Jen Hanks. I am testifying today in support of H.R. 6337, the Biking on Long Distance Trails Act, commonly referred to as the BOLT Act.

I am speaking today because I am passionate about mountain biking. That passion has led me to become involved with the Southern Nevada Mountain Bike Association (SNMBA), of which I am a board member. SNMBA is a partner affiliate to The International Mountain Bike Association, IMBA, who works to make mountain biking and the outdoors more accessible to everyone. I am honored that IMBA asked me to testify in support of this bill as I am very excited about its potential.

Everyone who rides bikes has their own personal reason for why it is special. For me, exploring the backcountry self-sufficiently, taking in wide open vistas, enjoying nature with friends, and even pushing myself to my limit has helped me find my own personal strength and confidence as a woman. I love that I can ride my bike to faraway places, away from the noise and bustle of a big city. I have been mountain biking for almost 30-years, which is another reason I love this sport, it is a lifelong activity.

The BOLT Act will make an investment in cycling infrastructure allowing more people the opportunity to experience the backcountry. The mental and physical benefits of being outdoors cannot be denied. Building cycling infrastructure is also good economic policy. Outdoor recreation, particularly mountain biking, has grown in popularity over the last decade. In 2020, the outdoor recreation economy accounted for \$347.3 billion or 2% of the country's GDP.

As you are aware, this legislation will give federal agencies the opportunity to identify and catalog existing and new long trails, develop ideas for promotion and signage, and perhaps most importantly create an atmosphere that facilitates stakeholder engagement throughout the process of planning and execution. All this will be delivered in a report to Congress that sets in motion a plan for action to see these long distance trails come to fruition.

When I first learned of this legislation, I was particularly excited for what it could bring to Southern Nevada. The State of Nevada has more public land than any other state in the country, making it the ideal place for a long-distance bike trail. The potential for new long distance trails are numerous: from a trail that would circumnavigate Las Vegas creating outdoor opportunities for 2.5 million people, to a trail that connects Southern Nevada's many National Parks highlighting their small gateway communities. Not only would a long distance trail in Southern Nevada provide recreation opportunities to millions of people, it would diversify the economy, improve the physical and mental health of the community, and help attract much needed skilled workers looking for recreation close to home. I am sure there are many communities across the country who would see similar benefits.

Examples of long-distance bike trails that have helped create economic opportunities in their respective communities include the Ouachita National Recreation Trail in Arkansas, High Country Pathway in Michigan, and Maah Daah Hey in North Dakota. The BOLT Act will be instrumental in creating similar iconic backcountry experiences and making them more accessible to people across the country. Growing the outdoor industry coupled with an increase in new mountain bikers makes the BOLT Act even more relevant.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.