



YAY BIKES!

Yay Bikes! influences the conditions that help people safely and comfortably ride bicycles for transportation.



H.B. 64 Opponent Testimony

Erin Synk, Yay Bikes!

House Civil Justice Committee

May 23, 2023

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on behalf of Yay Bikes! on H.B. 64 which will significantly impact communities' abilities to complete public improvement projects and make critical investments in Ohio's trail network.

Yay Bikes! is a Central Ohio-based non-profit that helps people safely and comfortably ride bicycles for transportation and recreation by teaching riders how to safely and predictably ride on roads and working to improve bike infrastructure and road conditions for vulnerable users such as bicyclists. On behalf of our members, we oppose H.B. 64.

We are deeply concerned about language in House Bill 64 that would remove recreational trails from the definition of "public use" in Ohio's eminent domain law. Trails are a critical asset to Central Ohio, both for recreational purposes and commuting, and are widely used across the region. While hearing the term "trail" may conjure images of a leisurely recreational ride for most, many riders use the trails primarily for transportation. The trails often act as the "highways" of Central Ohio's bike network, providing critical connections between neighborhoods, job centers and other important amenities like schools, libraries, healthcare and retail, that are otherwise difficult or dangerous to make by bike.

Trails are not only important for mobility and transportation in Ohio. They are integral to a community's quality of life and offer numerous benefits to residents and visitors alike. They provide space for health and wellness activities, and a way to spend time outdoors that is easily accessible and incredibly popular. Biking is experiencing a surge in popularity. People flocked to the activity during Covid restrictions, and we find that many rediscovered a love of biking that they continue today.

In a statewide survey conducted by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, over 82 percent of respondents indicated trails are "extremely important" or "very important" to their daily

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lives. When asked what prevents them from using trails, 42 percent of respondents answered that there are not enough trails, and 35 percent said trails are too far away. This survey reaffirms what we hear time and again from people in Central Ohio: trails and greenways are a valuable resource. Restricting the ability to expand and enhance them will only hinder efforts to improve overall quality of life for Ohioans.

Finally, it is important to say that eminent domain is very rarely used for trails, but it is an important tool of last resort when making significant investments in complex networks, sometimes involving multiple jurisdictions. New development, jobs, and housing will always bring new public service challenges and changing transportation needs. House Bill 64 would eliminate this option and make it more difficult to fill gaps in regional trails, such as the Central Ohio Greenways network.

Chair Hillyer and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to submit opponent testimony on House Bill 64. We strongly urge you to reject these measures and continue to allow local governments and their constituents to make the choices that are best for their communities.

Respectfully submitted,

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Yay Bikes! Board Vice-President

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