



Testimony for House Transportation and Public Safety Committee on HB 250, Electric Bikes

Chairman Green and may it please the Committee,

COMBO (the Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization) is the only mountain biking organization in the greater Columbus region, serving a metro area of 1.4 million people. Our mission is to provide safe, enjoyable, and accessible places to ride. We have provided quality mountain bike trails for over twenty years, starting with our three trails at the Alum Creek State Park, where we work with the Ohio State Parks and the Army Corp of Engineers. In 2017, we maintain seven different trail systems from Galena to Chillicothe.

Our dedicated volunteer base contributed more than 3,000 hours in 2017 alone. Our membership includes more than 250 dues-paying members. We are an IMBA chapter, and our trails saw more than 30,000 laps last year. We are a 501(c)(3) public charity. COMBO is a member of the Ohio Trails Partnership, and the Ohio IMBA Chapters Committee.

### **Support for HB 250**

COMBO supports Ebike usage for roads, bikeways, and rail trails. The health benefits are enormous for those with limited mobility, those for just getting back into cycling, and for folks who just don't want to break a sweat while riding to work or running errands.

### **General Concerns about Ebikes on Natural-Surface Trails**

Ebikes are currently an extremely small segment of the mountain bike community, although their use has become more prevalent for city, commuter and recreational, paved trail usage. COMBO supports Ebike usage on roads and paved paths, but does not believe that Ebikes should be legislatively authorized to traverse on all natural-surface trails without land manager and community input as to the impact of Ebikes on the natural-surface trail system at issue.

COMBO conducted a survey of opinions relative to Ebike usage, with 275 responders. The responders were mainly mountain bikers, but those mountain bikers also indicated that they use the trails for other purposes such as hiking (70%), trail running (31%), and equestrian (1%).

Our findings were that the issue is very divisive, with 50% of respondents who would allow some for of Ebike usage on natural surface trails, while the other 50% would not allow any Ebike usage.

Nearly all of the mountain-bike trails in Ohio are multi-use, meaning that they may be used by cyclists, hikers, runners, and sometimes equestrians. User-group conflict is a real concern, and only recently have mountain bike gained acceptance among "traditional" outdoor activities. Introducing motorized transport to the trails may generate further user-group conflict and set back the image of the



sport. Additionally, the American Hiking Society has issued a policy statement, wherein it advocates against the use of Ebikes on natural-surface trails.

For those reasons, COMBO believes that Ebike usage should be limited on natural-surface trails, by allowing the landowner (usually governmental) to decide whether, for its own particular trail, Ebike usage is safe and environmentally-neutral in comparison to other trail users.

### **Analysis of HB 250**

We back the Bill, because strikes the proper balance. The Bill contains language that would allow an individual landowner the opportunity to approve Ebike use on their trails, after notice and opportunity for public input. Once we know more, there may be trails at which Ebike use is appropriate, and we don't wish to foreclose that opportunity.

Thanks,

Dan Fausey

President of COMBO