

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Official Testimony

Ohio House Bill 250:

“Establish requirements for using electric bicycles”

March 21, 2018



Good morning, Chairman LaRose and Members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Eric Oberg. I'm the Midwest Director for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the nation's largest trails organization. Our grassroots community is more than 1 million strong, with over 6,000 members and supporters right here in Ohio. Our Midwest regional office is based in Yellow Springs, and has been engaged in trail work in Ohio for nearly 20 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 250.

As e-bikes grow in popularity, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy believes it is important to clearly distinguish e-bikes—which have speed caps, generally require pedaling and do not have gasoline engines—from mopeds, motorcycles and other “motorized” vehicles. While motorized vehicles, with the exception of motorized wheelchairs and snowmobiles, are prohibited from many multi-purpose trails, this legislation makes clear that e-bikes are, first and foremost, bicycles that have motors—not motorized vehicles. That is an important distinction.

The organization believes that decisions about the use of e-bikes—and which types—on trails and bicycle facilities is a decision best made by state and local lawmakers and local trail managers. H.B. 250 supports that approach to local decision-making.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy believes that the “assist” e-bikes provide can make bicycling more accessible to those who may be interested in riding but who may not choose to use a traditional bicycle, such as those with disabilities, people transporting children or groceries, older people, those rehabbing from injury and others. But just as all traditional bicycle riders need to “Share the Trail” and moderate their behavior and speed for the safety and comfort of all users, e-bike riders will also need to keep the needs and safety of others in mind.

We believe that H.B. 250 is a positive step towards making safety-minded distinctions between types of e-bikes and types of trail usage, and one that upholds our stance that such decisions are best made at the state and local level. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy does not have a specific position on which types of e-bikes should be allowed or prohibited on any particular trail. However, we believe that making distinctions based on local conditions and input from interested parties is sound policy.

This bill is the product of an open and detailed process that has included trail groups here in Ohio. We feel that H.B. 250 reflects our nuanced stance on this issue and this healthy and positive process.

Thank you to Representative Brinkman for filing this legislation, and thank you to the Committee for allowing me to testify.