



Testimony to the House Civil Justice Committee  
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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 House Bill 64. I am submitting testimony in opposition to House Bill 64 on behalf of Ohio Bicycle Federation, as it would significantly impede our communities from conducting public infrastructure improvements.

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 Ohio, both for recreational purposes and commuting, and are widely used across the region. In addition, users travel from far and wide to use our trails. Just this weekend, I met a group of cyclists from California who were cycling the Ohio to Erie Trail.

Local governments officials are sensitive to the needs of property owners and limit their use of eminent domain. An example is the Big Walnut Trail in Gahanna, where the initial plan was to route the trail entirely along the Big Walnut Creek. When several property owners in one of the neighborhoods opposed the initial plan, the route was changed to build a sidepath along a nearby roadway. But sometimes eminent domain is necessary and should be permitted when there is no alternative route available.

The bill seems to imply that recreational trails are not important to Ohio residents. We often find that residents who were initially opposed to trail development change their minds after the trail is built. Again, in Gahanna, there were a few residents who opposed the development of the Big Walnut Trail but after the trail was built, they realized that they enjoyed the trail, whether to take their grandchildren out for walking or biking, or to meet neighbors who often became friends. These are true stories we learned from these same residents.

Ed Honton, former bicycle and pedestrian coordinator with the Ohio Department of Transportation, envisioned a recreational and transportation trail from the Ohio River to Lake Erie. His legacy has come to fruition with 85% of the off-road portions of the trail complete. We are very fortunate to have this trail and many others in our state and this legislation will make it more difficult to complete this trail and others.

We strongly urge you to remove the legislation that prohibits eminent domain from use for recreational purposes.