

Testimony on SB 331 on designating Flint Hills Nature trail state park
and Little Jerusalem Badlands state park

To

The Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

By:

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SB 331 seeks to amend K.S.A. 2017 Supp. 32-837.

I am in full support of this bill, for both reasons economic and personal.

As I write this on Kansas Day, I hope it's not total blasphemy to share a brief story about Missouri. In 2012, I had my first taste of bicycle touring by rail-trail along the Katy Trail, from Sedalia to Hermann. Friends and I spent an entire October weekend on bikes, in nature, just enjoying the wildlife, scenery, and gentle pace of bicycle touring. Though we were never far from urban amenities, the trail provided a perfect break from civilization.

When we returned to Kansas, the same group of friends immediately started planning trips along our state's rail-trails. In 2013, we took a trip south along Topeka's Landon Trail, then through country roads to the Flint Hills Nature Trail, all the way to Council Grove. I will never forget the scene of the ranchers managing controlled burns of prairie grasses as the sun set along the trail – nor will I forget the ferocity of the Kansas wind along the rolling hills near Council Grove. The steak dinner at Hays House after that grueling day was surely one of the best meals of my life!

Since then, I've ridden the FHNT a few other times; once, on the way to the Dirty Kanza in Emporia, and more recently, on the "Rush the Rails" event. My group arrived just in time to see the start of the fireworks as we crossed the creek bridge in Council Grove. What a welcome!

In addition, last summer I did a solo bike tour along the Prairie Spirit Trail, leaving from my door in Topeka and riding to Iola. Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism does a beautiful job of managing and maintaining this pristine nature trail and state park, and I have no doubt that KDWPT would be the best manager of the Flint Hills Nature Trail.

By now, my personal reasons should be obvious. I'd like to share economic incentives for developing the Kansas trails network. In 2012, Missouri State Parks conducted a study to determine the economic impact of the Katy Trail – and found that it is bringing \$18.5 million into the state per year.

Furthermore, as director of the state's first bikeshare network, Topeka Metro Bikes, I can attest that we would have failed from the start had we not planned our system around our community's trails. On any

given day, half our user's trips are along the Shunga Trail, the Lake Shawnee Trails, or the Landon Trail. Since 2015, we've had almost 5,000 people register for bikeshare in Topeka, and fully one-quarter of those have signed up because they can use these community bikes on Shawnee County trail facilities.

I know firsthand that developing trails and state parks, like the Flint Hills Nature Trail and Little Jerusalem Badlands, is good for Kansas. Given the significance of facilities like these for our bikeshare members, as well as other Kansans and visitors, I respectfully request that these areas be designated parts of the Kansas State Parks system.

I, Karl Fundenberger, appreciate the opportunity to address the Committee, and humbly support passage of this bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl Fundenberger". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Jan. 29, 2017