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Senate Bill 101

Testimony to Senate Committee on Transportation

Bill Maasen, Superintendent of Parks & Golf Courses
Johnson County Park & Recreation District

February 17, 2021

It is an honor and pleasure to provide testimony to the Transportation Committee related to SB 101, specifically pertaining to electric bicycles (e-bikes). I am a 34-year employee with Johnson County Park & Recreation District (JCPRD) spending my entire public service career on preservation of open space and creating recreation opportunities on that open space, including, but not limited to multi-use paved trails. JCPRD opposes SB 101 as currently drafted allowing Class 2 e-bikes to be operated on our system of paved trails. Class 2 e-bikes are a motorized conveyance operated with an accelerator and not impacted by the pedals on the bikes. JCPRD has studied carefully the matter of e-bikes on multi-use trails and exercising its local control has chosen not to allow Class 2 e-bikes.

JCPRD owns and manages over 136 miles of trails in its system which includes over 75 miles of bicycle trails. Johnson County and the various municipal entities have built a system of trails that includes over 300 miles of multi-use trails that are interconnected across jurisdictional boundaries throughout the County. Trails are an essential service impacting the quality of life to the citizens of Johnson County and an amenity routinely rated as one of the highest during surveys of the public.

In December of 2018, the JCPRD Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners authorized a temporary modification of its "code of regulations" related to the use of motorized conveyances and initiated a study of the possible impacts of allowing e-bikes on its paved, multi-use trails from March 1, 2019-June 1, 2019. The study or pilot project included researching what other communities were allowing in the metropolitan area, other midwestern states, national trends through professional associations, surveys of the public and in-person demonstrations on the use of e-bikes. Throughout the pilot project, accidents and conflicts were monitored and recorded. As a result of this pilot project and the results of all public input, the JCPRD Board of Park & Recreation Commissioners voted in February 2020 to permanently allow the use of Class 1 and Class 3 e-bikes on all paved multi-use trails in its jurisdiction. Both Classes of bikes are pedal assist, meaning the motor only operates when the pedals are being used.

SB 101, as drafted, is recommending the allowance of Class 2 e-bikes which are operated with an accelerator and not impacted by the pedals on the bikes. This legislation could also be considered a

loss of home-rule for Johnson County municipalities and require a public hearing where much public discussion has already taken place. In this case, one size may not fit all as there is a diverse set of unique trail opportunities throughout Kansas. JCPRD does not have a problem with the legislation if the rule impacted state owned and operated trails, for example those trails managed by State Parks. The continued recommendation of allowing Class 2 will lead to more conflict with other user groups that want to bring various motorized conveyances to paved multi-use trails in Johnson County. For example, three types are shown in the following photographs.

The three images have one thing in common with Class 2 e-bikes and that is there is marginal exercise associated with these units and all are operated by a means other than pedaling. Additionally, these are all motorized conveyances that JCPRD prefers to not have operating on its system of trails.

I would be happy to answer any questions or respond to any concerns.

