



August 17, 2021

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We write today in support of a thorough evaluation of electric bicycles on Nashville’s greenways that includes safety considerations, community engagement, planning requirements, environmental considerations, initial trial periods, and monitoring.

Greenways for Nashville’s mission is to create, preserve, and promote a system of greenways which are safe and accessible to all members of our vast and unique community. A key component of enacting this mission is ensuring the physical safety of all greenway users. In our 27+ years of partnership with Metro Parks, the greenway system has grown to nearly 100 miles of ADA compliant, non-motorized multi-use trails and open space that is treasured by walkers, runners, cyclists, skaters, and people with a wide range of abilities. With increasing pressure for motorized electric bicycle access to the greenways, we must carefully consider how this decision could potentially impact user safety.

Nashville’s greenways are predominantly pedestrian, a central characteristic which was demonstrated in recent spot-surveys on three busy greenways that recorded 69-86% of the users on foot. With a 10’-12’ width, our greenways nod toward a generally slow-paced setting – which is important to ensuring safety for children, users with disabilities and mobility constraints, and surrounding wildlife. Due to the existing frequency of cyclist-pedestrian collisions on Nashville’s greenways, we urge a thoughtful evaluation of the potential risks of adding heavier, power-assisted e-bikes to the equation.

Nashville’s greenways and trails were acknowledged as the most valued park amenity in the 2017 Plan to Play master plan survey. In many communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, parks, trails and other open space amenities served as the sole source of recreation opportunities. A National Recreation and Parks Association Parks Snapshot survey revealed park and trail usage surged by upwards of 50 percent (or more), and Nashville’s greenways certainly saw similar gains. Over the past 18 months our organization heard testimonies from users sharing how greenways saved their life, marriage, family, and overall well-being during a paralyzing time. Scientific research further supports this improved well-being and the direct link between good mental and physical health with access to greenspace and exercise in a low-stress environment. We must ask ourselves, “if users are left feeling unsafe on the greenways, where else could they go to seek respite and well-being?”

In the public’s best interest, we must thoroughly evaluate the "ifs" and "hows" of motorized electric bicycles on our greenway trails and engage our community to determine what’s best for Nashville and Nashvillians.

Sincerely,

Amy P. Crownover, Executive Director

CC: Mayor Cooper, Greenways and Open Space Commissioners and Metro Parks Board Members

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