



BlueRibbon Coalition
P.O. Box 5449
Pocatello, ID 83202
208.237.1008
brc@sharetrails.org

Ben Burr, Executive Director

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P.O. Box 5449
Pocatello, ID 83202

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Jessica Barela
P.O. Box 110
Questa, NM 87556

BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) is writing to provide scoping feedback for the Questa to Red River Trail Proposal Environmental Assessment. BRC is a national non-profit organization that champions responsible recreation and encourages a strong conservation ethic and individual stewardship. We champion responsible use of public lands and waters for the benefit of all recreationists by educating and empowering our members to secure, protect, and expand shared outdoor recreation access and use by working collaboratively with natural resource managers and other recreationists. Our members use motorized and non-motorized means of recreation, including e-bikes, OHVs, horses, mountain bikes, and hiking to enjoy federally managed lands throughout the United States, including those of the United States Forest Service. BRC members visit the Carson National Forest for e-bikes, mountain bikes, motorized recreation, sightseeing, photography, hunting, wildlife and nature study, camping, water sports, and other similar pursuits. We would like to add our support to any comment submitted by any other individuals or organizations that advocate for electric bike use and increased recreation access overall. BRC members and supporters have concrete, definite, and immediate plans to continue such activities in the future.

Trails and E-Bike Use

BRC supports the allowance of Class 1 and 2 e-bikes on the Questa to Red River Trail. E-bikes provide a low-impact alternative to traditional mountain biking when trails are sustainably designed, constructed, and maintained. This trail system meets sustainable trail design standards that should mitigate any impacts associated with e-bike use. We encourage the Forest Service to implement education and outreach programs if concerns arise regarding public safety, trail conditions, or wildlife, rather than restricting or prohibiting e-bike use.

Federal and state land management agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service, have increasingly approved e-bike use on mountain bike trails to expand access and accommodate a broader range of users. Allowing Class 1 and 2 e-bikes on this trail will ensure consistency with these practices, simplify public understanding of where e-bikes are permitted, and support equitable access for riders of all abilities.

Economic and Community Benefits

Local communities rely heavily on recreation for economic opportunity. Emerging e-bike use represents a rapidly growing segment of the outdoor recreation economy, projected to reach \$15 billion by 2030. By allowing Class 1 and 2 e-bikes, the Questa to Red River Trail can attract more visitors, enhance tourism, and generate economic benefits for nearby communities.

Restricting e-bike use would isolate a significant user group and limit potential revenue that can support both local businesses and continued trail stewardship. In 2022 recreation accounted for over \$1 trillion to the U.S. economy. The majority of this was motorized recreation. The EA sufficiently shows the economic driver this trail will be to local communities.

Health and Accessibility

E-bikes provide moderate-intensity physical activity and offer meaningful health benefits, especially for older adults or those with physical limitations. They enable users to access more challenging terrain, maintain cardiovascular exercise, and participate in outdoor recreation without undue physical strain. Inclusion of e-bikes ensures that public lands are accessible to a wider range of users, supporting public health and inclusive recreation goals.

Policy Context

The allowance of Class 1 and 2 e-bikes is consistent with federal policy directives that promote public access and recreation. The EXPLORE Act encourages enhanced recreational opportunities on public lands, and Secretarial Orders and Executive directives emphasize the

importance of expanding recreational access, including for motorized and mechanically assisted activities. Managing the Questa to Red River Trail to accommodate e-bikes aligns with these priorities while maintaining sustainability and resource protection.

Motorized Recreation

BRC strongly supports continued motorized access on the Questa to Red River Trail for motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs, and other lawful motorized vehicles. Motorized recreation is a longstanding, legally recognized use on National Forest System trails and is an important component of the multiple-use mandate. Properly managed motorized trails can coexist with non-motorized and e-bike use through sustainable design, clear signage, and education.

Motorized recreation provides substantial economic benefits to surrounding communities, particularly in rural areas like Questa and Red River. Visitors using motorcycles and other motorized vehicles contribute to lodging, dining, fuel, and retail sales, supporting local jobs and small businesses. National studies consistently show that motorized recreation generates billions in economic activity annually, and that well-designed motorized trails can minimize environmental impacts while providing meaningful access to remote public lands.

Allowing motorized use alongside Class 1 and 2 e-bikes and traditional mountain bikes supports a truly **multi-use trail system**, ensuring that public lands are accessible to the broadest range of users. Trail managers can mitigate potential conflicts and resource impacts through proactive measures such as speed management, trail separation where appropriate, and user education. Restricting motorized use would unnecessarily limit access, reduce recreational opportunities, and diminish the economic and social benefits these trails provide.

Proper signage, information and education can allow for all users to be safe and enjoy this trail. It would be inconsistent to develop a trail only for non-motorized users and not equal amount of mileage for motorized users as well. BRC believes motorized and non-motorized recreation can co-exist and one user group does not have to have priority over another.

Conclusion

BRC supports shared use of the Questa to Red River Trail, allowing Class 1 and 2 e-bikes alongside traditional mountain bikes. Sustainable trail design, user education, and proactive management can mitigate potential impacts while maximizing recreation, health, and economic benefits. We urge the Forest Service to finalize the trail plan with explicit provisions allowing Class 1 and 2 e-bikes, ensuring public lands remain accessible, inclusive, and enjoyable for all visitors.

BRC would like to be considered an interested public for this project. Information can be sent to the following address and email address:

Ben Burr
BlueRibbon Coalition
P.O. Box 5449
Pocatello, ID 83202
brmedia@sharetrails.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B Burr', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ben Burr
Executive Director
BlueRibbon Coalition

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Simone Griffin'.

Simone Griffin
Policy Director
BlueRibbon Coalition