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Comments: RE: Proposed Ebike Use Teton Pass Area

In the many years I have spent walking and biking around the Teton Pass Road and Phillips Canyon, I have witnessed many changes as well as an evolution in usage. The user groups have grown and become more varied. In the summer months, these areas have become incredibly busy as reflected by the packed parking areas and increased trail traffic. For this reason, I am quite surprised that the USFS is considering adding another user group to an environment that is already saturated with people, horses, dogs, road bikers, mountain bikers, downhill bikers and even skateboarders. The USFS, by its own admission, has indicated it has very limited resources to manage, much less supervise the current usership of the area. Therefore I question, why at this moment, would you introduce a user group that poses hazards to other users and will clearly require monitoring and regulation.

A substantial number of ebike proponents claim that with a "solid monitoring plan" and stickers everything will be fine. It is not that simple. What exactly constitutes a solid monitoring plan? Prior to any approval, the so called monitoring plan should be thoroughly vetted. What precisely does the USFS intend to do? It might surprise community members to know that only authorized law enforcement can enforce regulations on the Pass, so yes, we will likely be relying on monitoring. Please know that monitoring ebike usage to date has not been effective. Thus far, many well intentioned pass advocates have advised ebike users on the Pass that ebiking is prohibited. Instead of compliance, these community advocates are generally ignored or subjected to verbal nastiness. What kind of compliance should be expected in the future?

Many people, myself included, have abandoned walking on the local pathways due to hazards posed by irresponsible ebikers. Friends of Pathways has even created an online Pathway Incident Report due to the escalation of dangerous bike encounters on the paths. This is not to say that all ebikers are reckless, that is not the case. However, allowing ebikers of all ages, bike handling abilities, and temperaments on the Old Pass Road, a road that averages a 10 percent grade for approximately 3.5 miles as well as several steeper grades is a truly frightening thought. It is no less daunting to think about ebikes on steep one track trails with blind corners. Conflicts and serious accidents will occur. Moreover, the dirt trails will certainly become busier as ebikers will be better able to efficiently "lap" trails using less time and effort. This will inevitably lead to more trail erosion. The buzzing of the mini dozer used for trail work will be present ever more frequently: digging, relocating material and disturbing both trail users and wildlife. Does the USFS have time to monitor this? What are the metrics?

Additionally, I question what does the future hold for Crater Lake, will it become the local swimming hole due to easy motorized access? How will the future maintenance of the Old Pass Road be addressed should current support decline? What is the potential for dirt trails to become one way, and should this occur, won't the trails be overwhelmed with ebikers overtaking and tailing non ebike riders, what etiquette is expected? These are only a few of the questions that should be asked, carefully reviewed and answered before moving forward.

Due to above mentioned concerns, I am not in favor of opening trails on Teton Pass to the ebike community at large as I believe there are too many negative trade offs. However, I would be supportive of an initiative to allow individuals with mobility issues and people above a certain age to be permitted ebike access in order to promote more diverse use public lands. Park City has accomplished this.