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Comments: As the President of the University of Arkansas Cycling Team, I am writing to advocate for the development of a lift access park in Mena, AR. The establishment of a lift at such a park within three hours of Fayetteville would be highly beneficial for our team and the broader community. Currently, many of our team members travel to Colorado, Texas, Tennessee, and other states during the summer to access lift parks for training. A local lift access park would allow us to maximize our training sessions, significantly enhancing our practice efficiency compared to the limited laps possible with shuttle-accessible trails.

The economic impact of a lift access park cannot be overstated. Attracting cyclists from surrounding areas would boost local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and retail shops. To see the impact expected and to continually attract people to the area, the establishment of a lift at such a park is essential. Mount Nebo and Ponca continue to see only a small number of riders a few times a year. In contrast, a dedicated lift would draw people in and bring them out every weekend, as the infrastructure would allow them to ride as much as possible.

A lift access park would provide a safer and more efficient training environment for our team, allowing for continuous practice without the downtime associated with shuttle services. This setup is particularly beneficial for hosting downhill (DH) racing events, which are easy to market and get coverage. Unlike enduro racing, which is hard to market due to the large tracks sprawled over multiple mountains, DH racing benefits from the infrastructure and continuous access provided by lifts, mostly running down single trails, making it more appealing for both participants and spectators. DH racing has a significant following, and a dedicated lift access park would enable Mena to host regional and national events, bringing in additional revenue and exposure.

Youth engagement is another critical benefit. A high-quality lift access park would inspire local youth to take up mountain biking, fostering a new generation of advanced riders. Statistics show that towns with lift access parks often produce more advanced talent, as these facilities provide the necessary environment for skill development. Additionally, opportunities for partnerships with local businesses, sponsors, and educational institutions to support and promote the park are abundant. Finding organizations to sponsor trails and possibly even chair lifts would further enhance the community's investment in this project.