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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is John Maddox and I am the State Representative for this District. I am a small business owner and a lifelong resident of Polk County, Arkansas. I have reviewed the proposed plan and I would like to make the following comments.

This project has been discussed for approximately four years now. The process has been extremely collaborative as City, County, State and Federal Government officials have worked together on this project. There have been numerous public meetings where City, County, State and Federal officials have spent countless hours answering every question posed by our citizens. These meetings were extremely well attended with hundreds of people attending each meeting. I would characterize these meetings as more of a pep rally than a meeting. I have never seen our community so united around a project. I am asked almost every day about the status of the project and when construction will begin. Our community could not be more excited about this project.

The economic impact of this project will be massive with hundreds of jobs created and tens of millions of dollars pumped into this region's economy annually. This project will benefit every single business in the region. It will certainly benefit every restaurant, hotel and retail business in the region. If a business is not directly impacted it will certainly help them attract and retain talent.

Further, as we are all aware, many people now have the ability to work from home and therefore they can live wherever they choose. If this region has one of the premier Mountain Biking Trail Systems in all of North America that will certainly help retain and attract talented people. We have wonderful Public Schools in this county and a thriving Community College and this project will be extremely beneficial for them.

We have all witnessed so many of our youth leave after high school and never return because they cannot find employment here. It seems we lose most of these children and families to Northwest Arkansas. I personally know and talk to many young people who grew up here and would love to return but they cannot find suitable employment. The economic development this project would create would provide more opportunities for our children and our grandchildren to stay here and raise their families here.

As a lifelong resident of this area , I have heard that "there is nothing for our kids to do" countless times over the years. I do not necessarily believe that , but clearly many people do as I have heard this comment so often. When we have one of the premier Mountain Biking Trail Systems in all of North America there will certainly be something for our kids to do. This is the element of the project that excites me the most, even more than the jobs and economic development. The ability for our young people (and all of our citizens) to have such an amazing outdoor attraction that they can experience every day. This trail system will be our trail system, it will benefit the people who live in this region more than anyone else. We are now learning of the horrific effects phones and screens are having on our youth. This will provide another outlet for our children and grandchildren to put their phones down and get outside. The positive physical and mental effects this trail system will have on our youth and all of our citizens is what excites me the most about this project.

I wholeheartedly endorse the full implementation of this plan.