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Dear members of the Transportation Committee,

I am here today as a passenger rail subject matter expert to express my concerns regarding the proposed legislation to replace rail tracks with a bicycle path. While I understand the importance of promoting alternative modes of transportation and addressing climate change, I firmly believe that ripping up rail tracks up to 30 miles in length would be an act of economic malpractice and would perpetuate an elitist approach that limits future passenger rail services.

Firstly, dismantling rail tracks without a thorough assessment of their potential economic benefits and long-term value would be shortsighted. Rail transportation plays a crucial role in fostering economic growth and connectivity. It provides efficient and reliable transportation for both passengers and freight, supporting businesses, trade, and tourism. Removing rail infrastructure denies communities the opportunity to leverage these economic advantages.

Secondly, replacing rail tracks with a bicycle path may seem like a sustainable initiative, but it disregards the potential of integrated transportation systems. Passenger rail services are an integral part of a comprehensive and multimodal transportation network. By eliminating rail tracks, we hinder the potential for future rail expansion, limiting options for commuters and travelers. This approach is elitist in nature, as it caters to a specific group of individuals who prefer cycling, while neglecting the diverse needs of the population, including those who rely on or would benefit from passenger rail services.

Furthermore, combatting climate change requires a holistic approach that combines various strategies. Passenger rail is widely recognized as one of the most energy-efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transportation. It reduces carbon emissions and alleviates traffic congestion. By ripping up rail tracks, we not only hinder current efforts to mitigate climate change but also limit future opportunities to expand rail infrastructure and promote sustainable transportation.

Instead of dismantling rail tracks, I encourage the committee to consider alternative approaches that prioritize the integration and enhancement of existing transportation systems. This could include developing greenways alongside rail tracks, allowing for both cycling and rail transportation to coexist harmoniously. By doing so, we can promote sustainable mobility, support economic growth, and offer a comprehensive transportation network that meets the needs of all members of our communities.

In conclusion, ripping up rail tracks up to 30 miles in length and replacing them with a bicycle path would be a misguided decision with long-lasting negative consequences. It would constitute economic malpractice, hinder future passenger rail services, and neglect the importance of integrated transportation systems in combating climate change. I urge the committee to reconsider this legislation and explore alternative solutions that promote a balanced and sustainable approach to transportation.

Thank you for your attention.