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March 8, 2021

Vermont House Committee on Transportation  
Montpelier, VT

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Local Motion, a statewide advocacy organization for biking and walking, and our partner Old Spokes Home, a Burlington-based bike shop and nonprofit that helps create access to bikes and the opportunities they provide for all people in the community. Together, we encourage the Transportation Committee to support policies and incentive programs that will help Vermonters purchase e-bikes and use them to meet their transportation needs. We are providing (attached) a set of testimonials from Vermonters that illustrate how an e-bike can change a person's life.

For many Vermonters the e-bike represents an affordable, accessible, and climate-friendly replacement for a car. E-bikes can allow a bicyclist to go further with less effort, even on the hilly terrain in our state, making it possible for more people to use a bike for their daily commute, to get around town (or between towns) to meet their daily needs, or for exercise and recreation.

Our organizations have been working together to make sure that e-bikes are a part of Vermont's transportation future. Local Motion operates an E-bike Lending Library that travels the state lending out e-bikes for free so individuals can try them out, and many have purchased their own e-bike after. Old Spokes Home has several options for helping Vermonters purchase an affordable e-bike, including offering subsidies and helping their customers take advantage of the BED and GMP e-bike rebate program. Through our work, we have seen first-hand the importance of e-bikes for people and for a more sustainable and equitable transportation system. We encourage the Committee to consider an incentive program to make it possible for even more people, regardless of income and circumstance, to own an e-bike.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Yacos".

Karen Yacos

## **E-bike Testimonials - Submitted by Local Motion and Old Spokes Home**

3/9/21

"I rented the Urban Arrow for my family and for four glorious days we survived without our car. **I was happier, my kids were happier and everyone we passed had smiles on their faces.** We loved it!" - South Burlington, VT

"I have a disability that makes it difficult to ride a bicycle. That, combined with the rural, hilly nature of my town, kept me from being able to ride in my community. My health was suffering as a result. I purchased an e-bike this summer, and all of that changed. The freedom and the new, deeper, connection to my community has been a huge gift during COVID. My health has improved significantly, and I have a much stronger and deeper connection to my town. **My e-bike has, without exaggeration, changed my life.**" - Isle La Motte

"Loved having the e-bikes - my husband and I both had one on different weekends - and we shared them with neighbors and friends. I commuted to work on them both and encouraged my co-workers to try it too. I also rode down to the White River coop from Norwich for groceries...came back with a full bag and a six pack! **I loved going up the hills I often avoid.**" - Norwich, VT

"I am the race director for Howard Center's Zoe's Race and I used the bike to help lug things around for our event. **Having the bike made getting supplies out to locations up and down the bike path and through neighborhoods a breeze.**" - Burlington, VT

See Attached: Poem from Laurie, a cyclist in Colchester.

From Old Spokes Home: Synopsis of Wes Dunn's story (full letter attached):

Wes had just completed a teaching apprenticeship and, as a farm laborer, did not have any savings. His car had broken down so he turned to Old Spokes Home's E-Bike Program, which allowed him to get a high-quality E-Bike for \$50 a month, via an Opportunities Credit Union loan. He used the bike to commute to a temporary job opportunity in Fairfax in about an hour; this led to full-time employment and the ability to purchase a car for the worst of Vermont's winters. Wes plans to continue to use the e-bike in good weather. "Crucially, the breakthrough I've found this school year wouldn't have been possible without the leg-up and flexibility granted by the E-Bike."

**(Full text of letter from Wes Dunn)**

To the VT State Transportation Committee,

I came to Vermont as a UVM student, and like many of my peers, endeavored to remain in the state after graduating. After working on farms for a couple of years, I enrolled in Champlain College's Teacher Apprentice Program (TAP) to become a High School English teacher. As a farm laborer, I hadn't saved anything, and with the \$2000 old Saab I'd bought to get from Winooski to the farm in Richmond broken down and sold away, I commuted to my student-teaching placement by bike.

After completing TAP, I was able to land a temporary, foot-in-the-door opportunity as a long-term substitute for a High School teacher on maternity leave this past fall. The only catch was that the job was at BFA Fairfax - a good twenty miles away from my apartment in Winooski. Without the savings for a car or the standing for a car loan, I turned to Old Spokes Home's E-Bike Program, which allowed me to get a high-quality E-Bike for \$50 a month, via an Opportunities Credit Union loan. Using the bike's strong electric assist, I was able to get from Winooski to Fairfax in just an hour (it takes 35-40 mins by car), without breaking a sweat. The added benefit was that I remained flexible, in case I ended up not getting another job right after this one ended, or found one closer to home. I could always use a good bike around town, but wouldn't necessarily want to have a superfluous car and its monthly payments.

BFA Fairfax ended up being pleased with my work, and the door stayed open - I was offered a full-time, full-year contract for another teaching position in the school. With that contract in hand, I was able to get, and can now afford, a loan for a quality used car, which I've been using instead of the E-Bike for the harsh winter months. As we thaw into spring, I'm excited to get back on the E-Bike for the daily commute, because it's simply a more enjoyable way to get from A to B. But crucially, the breakthrough I've found this school year wouldn't have been possible without the leg-up and flexibility granted by the E-Bike. I strongly encourage you to strengthen the financial programs that gave me this opportunity, and to continue improving our state's cycling infrastructure so that more people could access its benefits. In my case, the urban areas around Winooski, Colchester and Essex Junction present a lot of danger on a bike, while the more rural zones around Fairfax can also be challenging due to lack of road shoulder and speeding cars. In order for more people less athletically inclined than myself to take on E-Bike commuting, protected bike lanes and similar infrastructure will likely make a huge difference.

Best,

Wes Dunn

**(Poem from Laurie, cyclist in Colchester)**

Oh the places we'll go!  
We'll be on our way now!  
With our new e-bikes we head to bike paths and road.  
From April to November, even through snow.

Towing a red trailer behind Ruby Gazelle.  
To the grocery and OGE, or picnic at Snow Farm Winery.  
The causeway and Bike Ferry on the weekend itinerary.

We fly from Lake Street to UVM up that Main Street hill.  
A quick stop at the lights, up up we will sail.  
With a child's grin and a giggle, I shuss from St. Louis to intervale.

A vacation you say? Oh yes, let's go!  
Pick a place to explore bike trails, no matter the terrain.  
With e-bikes, our lives are forever changed.

