

My name is Samuel Sherman, and I am a resident of York. I am writing this independently of any organization, in opposition of LD 676.

I strongly oppose LD 676, which would significantly hinder the potential restoration of rail service on the Mountain Division. The removal of the existing track and transformation of the right of way into a trail would effectively eliminate any chance of bringing rail transportation back to the communities in Western Maine. The time to consider fixing the track to a usable state is now, before the existing infrastructure is gone.

Conway Scenic Railroad has already expressed interest in buying, restoring, and using the corridor for rail service. They have made it clear that it would be used not just for tourism, but also for freight transportation, which would significantly cut shipping costs to the region and boost economic growth. Considering that Conway Scenic Railroad would be responsible for the maintenance and day-to-day operations of the Mountain Division, it would be cost-efficient for the state. The existence of a usable corridor to transport goods to the region would create more jobs and bring down the cost of goods that would normally need to be transported by road. Thus, it is economically beneficial for the State of Maine not to pass LD 676.

The main option being considered under the bill would be to replace the track with a trail along the right of way. Although a trail would certainly serve a great recreational purpose, it is important that the track remains intact for future use. However, the existence of the track does not preclude having a trail. There are already sections, in places like Windham and Fryeburg, that have a trail alongside the rails. This rail-with-trail model is the ideal compromise between having a multi-use trail and a working rail corridor.

In conclusion, the best option is to allow the restoration of rail service on the Mountain Division and to continue the trail alongside the existing track. For these reasons, I ask that you Vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 676.