

Jacob Thomas  
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Good Morning,

I am writing to voice my opposition of this portion of the bill, and the overall efforts to discontinue rail access from Portland to North Conway.

I'll be brief.

Reason 1: The Right of Way (ROW) from Portland to New Hampshire provides a vital link to New Hampshire's North Country that is largely underserved by rail. Maintaining this link will promote growth of industry in the future, and provide a competitive alternative to customers already there.

Reason 2: The Sebago Lakes region is fortunate to have numerous quarries and gravel pits, which are within distance of the ROW. With transload improvements, the Mountain Division could provide a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to transport aggregate, get trucks off the road and reduce traffic in an already congested region of the state.

Reason 3: The state has provided millions of dollars to date in maintaining the ROW, with the intent to restore rail service if an operator appears. It is apparent that Conway Scenic has interest in the line. It would be foolish to not work with them and, instead, have the millions of dollars and decades of maintaining the line in vain.

Reason 4: Tourism has become extremely important to our state's economy. Providing a link from Portland to North Conway not only offers a viable transit option, but it helps the tourism industry in both regions.

Please note that I understand the line is expensive to maintain, and I do not want the committee to mistake my testimony for someone who is pro-railroad. Severing the line is irreversible and would be a costly mistake not only locally, but for the economy of both states.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

-Jake Thomas