

LD404

This year will mark 20 years since I became President of the Mountain Division Alliance.

There are currently 2 completed sections of the MDT in Fryeburg, Windham and Gorham totaling 9 miles.

Each section is used by over 100 people per day in the non-winter months. They have helped people get and stay more active and are like linear parks where community members can meet, walk, run, or bike.

The goal has always been to connect Portland and Fryeburg with a 52-mile paved trail that would connect the nine towns along the way.

The easiest sections have been constructed and most of the unfinished sections involve water crossings and bridges. Building a half road next to the existing rail between Standish and Fryeburg is prohibitively expensive. It would require several sections to leave the railroad right of way and be sited along busy roads and involve the taking property by eminent domain – the last thing anyone wants.

The Commissioner's Rail Use Advisory Council, made up of both rail and trail advocates as well as municipal and state officials concluded after 7 months of study that the best use for the Mountain Division Railbed would be a trail until rail. The rails will be removed, and the trail will be built directly on the railbed while keeping it intact, protected from being developed. The bed will be preserved if rail service is ever deemed practical again.

There has been no passenger service on the line for 50 years and no freight service for 30.

Every town along the state-owned line has approved this plan and people have overwhelmingly advocated for it.

This is not the first-time rails have been removed from this line. They were removed on the same railbed in Vermont in 2006 to build the Lamoille Valley Trail.

The future of the Mountain Division railbed has been discussed over and over through the years and we are now at a point where the approval of LD404 should be a routine exercise.

Thank you,

David Kinsman

President, Mountain Division Alliance