

Doug Smith
Windham Resident for 20 years
LD 404

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

I testify today in strong support of Senator Bennett's LD 404 "Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council" and vote **OUGHT TO PASS** for LD 404.

I have been a resident of South Windham for 20 years and live ½ a mile from the Mountain Division Trail. As the trail was built and paved, I came to use the trail more and more for walking, biking, and X-country skiing in the winter. From Spring until late Fall my wife and I are on the trail 3+ times a week. We are not alone. There are many other walkers, runners, cyclists, skateboarders, snowmobilers, and families with children, baby carriages, and dogs. It is a wonderful asset for Windham, Gorham, and the region. It has become a destination to safely exercise and see familiar faces.

This bill effectively extends this trail (connecting existing sections paved in Fryeburg and Windham/Gorham/Standish) from South Windham to Fryeburg and into NH. I am totally in favor of having a paved, trail until rail for this 31-mile section. The idea that residents of Standish, Steep Falls, Baldwin, Hiram, and Brownfield will experience what we have enjoyed and benefited for over 15 years by having a trail instead of an unused and unusable (in its present state) rail is tremendous and a worthwhile investment.

Frankly speaking, it makes sense for many reasons starting with:

- The tracks no longer serve a purpose. And, after being studied several times over the last 15 years by consultant's expert in transportation planning and analysis retained by the MaineDOT, show no prospects for being revitalized and economically viable in the foreseeable future.
- This is the most expedient way to build the trail and put this important Maine asset to good use.
- This is by far the least expensive way to build the trail. According to the Mountain Division RUAC Summary and Recommendations report (May, 2022) the cost of constructing a paved Trail until Rail is estimated at \$ 20.1 million and a rail with a trail was at estimated at \$ 145.8 million - over 7x the cost.

Please vote **Ought to Pass** for LD404 so Mainers can utilize this dormant and precious resource.

Sincerely,
Doug Smith