

Greetings, members of the joint transportation committee.

It's nice to see you all again! I'm Jack Duffin, the sales manager for the Conway Scenic Railroad, and I stand before you today imploring you to oppose LD 676, which seeks to fund the removal of rail on the Mountain Division from Standish to Fryeburg. Much like my previous testimony, I thought long about what I could say that hadn't been said before: rail lines that are transformed into "interim" trails are practically impossible to restore to active service once removed, a railroad operator is presenting itself so the term "trail until rail" should be at the "until rail" stage by this point, trains provide significant economic benefits to businesses and communities, we can put the trail next to the railroad, so on and so forth.

However, I want to use this time to refute some points I have heard in the past relating to the Mountain Division, most notably this one: the claim that the Mountain Division did not make a profit in all the years of its operation.

I've seen this claim stated and spread around across many different mediums— and truth be told I'm not sure where it originated— but I want to set the record straight here: such a claim is false. I will refrain from getting too deep into the history of how the line was a money-maker for the Maine Central Railroad right up to when that company was bought in 1983, but I will tell you that the Conway Scenic Railroad's continued success stands in direct contrast to this "no profit" claim. We've had to add capacity to our excursions running on New Hampshire's portion of the Mountain Division and run trains on the line in the winter to keep up with the growing demand.

I can understand why people may think this was the case given that the line had few on-line freight customers. That's partly because serving all the possible businesses up and down the line would not have worked with how the Maine Central ran the corridor, and is also not how we'd like to operate this railroad line. Rather than trains blasting through these towns without stopping, we'd like to properly serve these communities. We'd bring in propane and lower energy costs. We'd like to haul away garbage from these towns and keep Maine clean. We'd like to bring in lumber and reduce construction prices. We'd like to run a railroad.

Thank you all for your time, and I urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 676.