

04/04/2025 Mountain Division Rail Line Testimonial

Hello and good morning/afternoon,

My name is Hazen Searway, I am a born and raised Mainer and an employee of the Conway Scenic Railroad. I'd like to share why I choose trains and why I work at the Conway Scenic Railroad. I wish to promote the opportunity to grow and support business in Portland, North Conway, and destinations along the Mountain Division's route. My opinion may perhaps be biased; however, my intent in this testimony is to share the ways good would come from the Conway Scenic Railroad running on the Mountain Division Line in Maine.

I believe that railroads in the US are moving back into the spotlight; congested roads and skies do not offer a solution to the growing needs this country faces. There was once a time when this country solely relied upon trains to transport freight and people. The knowledge of how to do so was carefully passed down through the generations. This represents one of the many reasons I chose the Conway Scenic Railroad. My career path before railroading was aviation, and I hold a pilot's certificate with an instrument rating. I deviated from that course due to many of the stresses that come with airline transport. I thought I would try something different, not fully knowing what would come of it. Since making the change, I have learned quickly there is something incredibly special about train travel; you sit in a welcoming and comfortable environment, and the only thing required en route is to watch the world pass by the full-sized window. For these two reasons alone, you now have something for shorter distances that rivals airline travel. Train tickets are also a fraction of the price.

I believe an economic opportunity exists in keeping the Mountain Division open. As it stands, North Conway is one of, if not the most popular, destinations in New Hampshire. Portland has the greatest number of people in the state. Connecting the two locations simply could not be bad for business in either state. The Freight potential is there as well, With Vermont Rail to the west and CSX to the east, the Mountain Division could once again serve as the shortest physical length of railroad between them. The Conway Scenic Railroad possesses a lot of the required equipment to make this opportunity a reality, from passenger equipment to locomotives. This portion of the railroad is known and maintained by our Maintenance of Way department. We know what it takes to restore and run on what was previously abandoned rail. The removal of this line would only prevent any potential growth from being developed.

As has been done in both Fryeburg and here in Augusta, why not have a rail with trail? Modification would be needed to make it a safe activity; however, I believe it possible. As young individuals such as myself watched planes take off from a fence maybe the same could be done with trains on the rail trail. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Hazen Searway

Conway Scenic Railroad