

4 April 2025

Re: LD 676 An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council

Good morning.

My name is Wayne Duffett. I am a licensed professional engineer in Maine and a resident of Portland. I own an engineering company specializing in railroad bridges. I was an employee of Conway Scenic Railroad as a teenager in the 1970's and now inspect their bridges and work one day a week as a locomotive engineer.

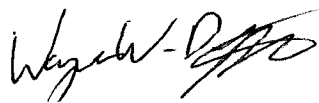
With many of these rail, trail, or rail with trail choices you often hear the suggestion the rail can be put back if the need arises. What that doesn't consider is the equipment that works on track needs the track to operate on. Once the track is removed, the cost to reinstall it is significantly higher.

Maine DOT has maintained and invested in the Mountain Division with the intent that rail service could be restored. They have installed three miles of new track with continuous welded rail. They have replaced one bridge. They have kept the track free of weeds, brush, and trees which has maintained the drainage away from the track and has preserved it well. And importantly, they have constructed nine miles of rail with trail preserving it for future use. This line can be reopened economically with the existing rail.

A railroad in Vermont is looking to reopen the Mountain Division from St Johnsbury, Vermont to Whitefield, New Hampshire. They do this with the intent of developing freight service. The potential is there the entire corridor could be restored. Projects like this are typically done incrementally, in affordable steps. But the improvement is continuous.

The Mountain Division in Maine is already in reasonable condition. Maine Central Railroad spent heavily on new ties and ballast in the late 70's and early 80's. I know because I worked for Maine Central on the Mountain Division in the summer of 1978. Being kept weed free has preserved this. The incremental steps to reopen it are affordable.

The Mountain Division has been maintained by MDOT for forty years waiting for the right person to see value in it. I respectfully ask this committee to consider tabling LD 676 for twelve months while this new potential use for the Mountain Division is vetted. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Duffett". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "W" and a series of loops and strokes for the surname.