



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Testimony in Support of LD 676, An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council

To the Committee on Transportation

by Josh Caldwell, Climate and Clean Energy Policy Advocate for NRCM

April 4, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Josh Caldwell, and I am here on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) in support of LD 676, An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council. NRCM is Maine's leading nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting Maine's environment, with nearly 20,000 supporters statewide and beyond.

We support providing funding for the creation of a multimodal trail from Standish to Fryeburg. The Legislature passed LD 404 last session to implement the recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council, a body that voted 11-1 to create a multimodal trail on the inactive rail corridor. Further, towns along this corridor, including Baldwin, Fryeburg, Gorham, Hiram, Standish, Westbrook, and Windham support this project to bring recreational, health, environmental, and economic benefits to their communities.

The Rail Use Advisory Council supports the project, the Legislature approved the project, the towns along the corridor approve of the project, and now all that is left to do is fund the project to actualize the many benefits it will bring.

The trail would connect two completed sections of paved trail running alongside the rail (5 miles in Windham/Gorham and 4 miles in Fryeburg) resulting in a 40-mile trail that would provide great economic, recreation, and public health value to communities along the trail. It would be a recreational destination but would also provide clean active transportation options for residents along the corridor. Transportation is by far the top contributor to climate pollution here in Maine. Providing active transportation infrastructure such as this trail will encourage clean transportation alternatives like biking, walking, and rolling, and mitigate car congestion and associated pollution.

For these reasons, we urge you to support LD 676. I am happy to answer any questions.